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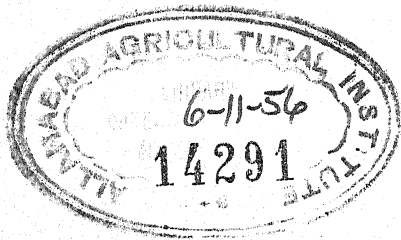
THE READER'S DIGEST ASSOCIATION  
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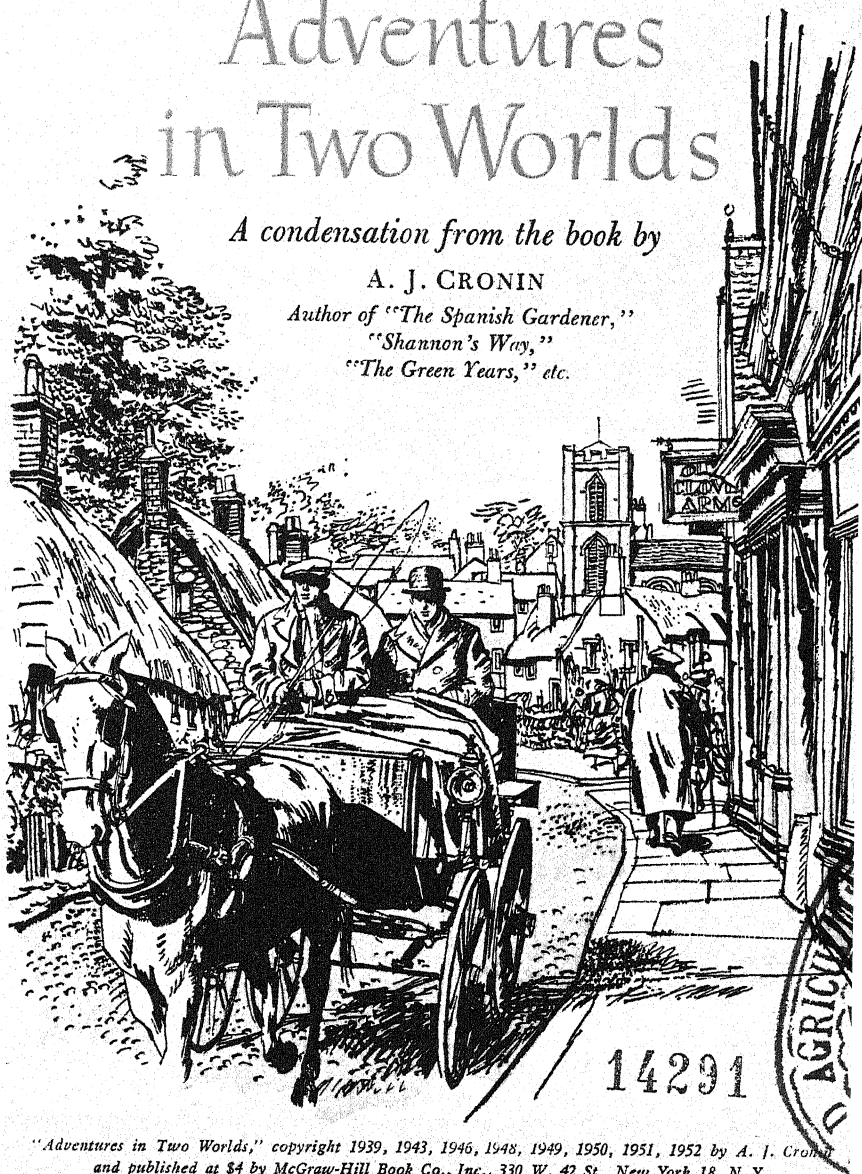
*Illustrations by Robert Fawcett*

# Adventures in Two Worlds

*A condensation from the book by*

A. J. CRONIN

*Author of "The Spanish Gardener,"  
"Shannon's Way,"  
"The Green Years," etc.*




*"Adventures in Two Worlds," copyright 1939, 1943, 1946, 1948, 1949, 1950, 1951, 1952 by A. J. Cronin  
and published at \$4 by McGraw-Hill Book Co., Inc., 330 W. 42 St., New York 18, N. Y.*

SO A GENERATION of readers who have delighted in such outstanding novels as *Hatter's Castle*, *The Citadel*, and *The Keys of the Kingdom*, A. J. Cronin, the author, is well known. Less familiar, however, is the story of young A. J. Cronin, M.D., who rose from the obscure and exhausting labors of a country doctor's assistant to a prosperous London practice. This selection from *Adventures in Two Worlds*, Dr. Cronin's autobiography, is a fascinating account of these early years among the hardy (and often perverse) crofters of his native Scotland.

From medical school on, the likable young doctor met setback and success alike with unbounded enthusiasm. Whether operating on a dying child under primitive conditions, or defying a county medical officer in the face of a dangerous epidemic, Dr. Cronin displays his own special blend of courage, good humor and sympathetic understanding. These qualities, plus his refreshing capacity for wry self-criticism, give his lively record its wide and heart-warming appeal.

## CHAPTER 1



WHEN I awakened that April morning in my attic bedroom, my head still cloudy from late hours of study, I felt constrained, reluctantly, to review my financial position. Thanks to the gratuity which I had received on my demobilization from the navy three months before, the fees for my medical classes were paid up until the end of the year. The gold watch and chain I had inherited from my father, once again judiciously pawned, had provided me with the requisite instruments and secondhand textbooks. In an academic sense I was strictly solvent.

But, alas, the other side of the ledger was less satisfactory. For the past month I had been subsisting on an occasional tearoom snack. I was, moreover, two weeks behind with my room rent, while my total assets—I counted the few coins again—were precisely three shillings and fivepence. Viewed from the rosiest aspect, it seemed scarcely an adequate sum on which to feed and clothe myself for the next eight months. Something must be done . . . and quickly.

Suddenly I burst out laughing, wildly, hilariously, rolling about on the lumpy mattress like a colt in a meadow. What did it matter? I was young, healthy, filled with that irrepressible spirit only to be found in a ruddy, towheaded Scot whose veins were infused with a dash of Irish red-blood corpuscles. I would work, work, work. I would live on air, sleep in the park, sing in the streets, do anything and everything, to enable me to take my doctor's degree. The war, thank God, was over—there would never be another! And spring was here, glorious spring, touching

even this smoky old city of Glasgow with its tender tints and sudden shafts of radiance. And — this above all — was I not immeasurably, hopelessly and utterly unsuitably in love?

She was a slender, brown-eyed young woman of 18, with soft russet hair and sun-warmed complexion, also studying medicine at the University of Glasgow. I had come upon her some weeks before, in the pathology department, dissecting an endocarditic heart with grave application. On looking up from her work she had noticed me, and at the blinding moment the seeds of an unreasoning affection were sown. My first remark was breathtaking in its fatuity. I said, "Isn't it foggy today?" But I learned that her name was Mary.

We began to go out together. On Saturdays we escaped the dreary city to nearby woods and hills, traveling through the suburbs by tramcar, then walking many miles across the moors, wind-burned and carefree.

In our serious moments we realized how impossible was our relationship. Temperamentally and practically we were the last two people in the world to consider, even remotely, the business of matrimony. She was quiet and reserved, brought up a strict Nonconformist and still, presumably, treasuring ardent hopes of becoming a doctor attached to one of the Uganda foreign missions. I was both happy-go-lucky and fiercely ambitious, and religion exercised me but little.

Our various friends had been kind enough to point out our mutual unsuitability, and from time to time we palely pledged ourselves to common sense, then parted, heroically, forever. But no sooner had we done so than, next morning, we came together by a force stronger than Newton's law of gravity and called Heaven to witness that we would never give each other up.

I jumped up and dressed quickly, regretting the necessity which made me wear my old naval uniform — on my return from service I had found the moths in possession of my sole civilian suit. Still, why not carry through with it in style? I set my peaked



cap at an angle, picked up my textbooks and ran downstairs.

Unluckily, my landlady lay in wait for me, guarding the front door with broom and bucket.

"Good morning, Mrs. Grant."

She did not respond to my greeting, but continued to regard me with her accusing eye.

"Did you cook a herring in your room last night?"

"Well . . . as a matter of . . ."

"The smell went all through the house. My Indian gentleman was fair upset. And you were wasting my gas."

"I didn't use much gas, Mrs. Grant. In fact" — I forced a jovial laugh — "I ate the thing half-raw."

She was not amused, but shook her head in melancholy disapproval. "I've nothing against you, lad, you back from the war and all. But you're away behind with your rent. If you cannot pay . . . you'll have to go."

I clenched my fist and banged it down hard on the well-worn cover of Osler's *The Principles and Practice of Medicine*.

"Mrs. Grant," I assured her, "I swear by Hippocrates, I'll pay you. Something is going to turn up for me. And soon!"

Outside, the breeze was soft and fresh. Upon the hill above, the low outline of the University lay with a massive, brooding air against the morning sky, as though burdened by the weight of its 500 years. How many Scottish country boys had come to these gray cloisters, bringing with them, in the early days, a sack of meal to make the porridge that would sustain them through months of study. How many of these ambitious lads, or perhaps how few, had won through in the end.

The thought galvanized me: at all costs I must succeed. The ten years of unbelievable hardship which had followed upon the death of my father had implanted in my breast a dominant passion for success. Nothing can exceed the longing of a poor youth, beaten down by circumstances, to rise above misfortune. Upon the heart of such a one is blazoned the motto: "Conquer

or die." With every pulse beat I seemed to hear, throbbing in my ears, the words "get on, get on, get on . . . to riches, high position, fame."

This morning, in the main surgical clinic of the University the excision of a cerebral tumor was to be performed—a special treat which I had no wish to miss—but beyond that, my hopes were centered upon a plan which I meant to put into execution as soon as the operation was over.

Practically the only chance for a student to support himself lay in securing an appointment as "dresser" or "houseman" to one of the Infirmary surgeons, a position which, though unpaid, entitled the fortunate incumbent to free board and lodging at the hospital. Now, I had been privately advised that the dresser to my surgery professor, Sir William Macewen, was presently to be promoted to the position of registrar. I felt that I stood well enough with Macewen to ask him for the position.

Already, in the operating theater, most of the class filled the circular tiers of benches that rose to the white-glassed roof. As I squeezed into the seat my friend Chisholm had reserved for me in the front row, the patient, a middle-aged woman already under the anesthetic, was wheeled in.

The expectant buzz that filled the theater ceased as the professor entered with calm dignity and a look of purpose. At this time Sir William Macewen was past 70, yet his tall spare figure, erect as a lance, his regular, clean-cut features and handsome profile, conveyed a sense of youthful indomitable vigor. For more than three decades he had been acclaimed as the finest brain surgeon in Europe. We students—a thoroughly hardened and disrespectful lot—loved and revered him, knew him among ourselves as "Billee," repeated with affection the legends that had grown around his name.

He was already gowned for the operation and when he turned toward the class his voice was soft yet incisive, his manner courteous, a model of politeness.

"Gentlemen, we have today an interesting case which we believe exhibits unmistakably the symptoms of intracranial glioma."

He paused, and his eye came to rest upon me.

"What are these symptoms?"

I answered, "Intense headache, vomiting without apparent cause, unrelated to the taking of food, and extreme vertigo."

"Continue."

"There is usually marked optic neuritis with choked disk. The relative degree of neuritis is a reliable guide to the side on which the tumor is situated."

"And if this tumor were situated in the cerebellum?"

"The speech would be slow and jerky, the head retracted. The patient would tend to fall toward the side opposite the tumor. Unilateral paralysis would occur."

"The prognosis?"

"The outlook is grave. Tumors of the base of the brain, though usually circumscribed, are difficult to reach. Death may occur from sudden hemorrhage, or pressure on the vital centers."

"Admirable. I congratulate you."

With an effort, I maintained my air of studious detachment. Above all, at this moment, I had wished to impress Billee with my earnestness and efficiency. I felt that in offering me this opportunity fortune could not have been kinder to me.

Like an artist defining the outline of a great picture, Macewen made the first incision. Swiftly he reflected the scalp, exposed the shining table of the skull. Then the whir of the trephine filled the room as he began to cut away a circle of bone as large as a good-sized saucer. The work was hard, for he did not use an electric drill. Macewen disdained modern appliances, relying entirely upon the simplest equipment and his own superb skill. Once, when called as an expert witness in a high court of law, he was asked by the presiding judge if he boiled his instruments. "My Lord," Billee replied, holding out his hands, small and delicate as a woman's, "how could I boil these?"

Now he had laid aside the trephine and with a retractor lifted out the disk of bone. When it was done, and the pink membranes of the brain were revealed, frail and delicately veined as a butterfly's wing, a low murmur, almost a sigh, broke from the class. There, under the bright beam of the professor's frontal mirror, ringed by forceps, was the tumor.

And now Macewen, slowly and deliberately, began to dissect out the growth from the complex tracts and convolutions with which it was entwined and which, if severed, would cause the patient's instant death. What miracles of skill and knowledge, what judgment and intuition, what imperturbable courage were displayed in this technique! Watching, fascinated, as he touched the chords of life, I longed with all my heart to achieve something of the mastery which had brought him to such pre-eminence. Ah, yes, that was the battle cry . . . get on, get on, get on!

At last, it was done—with unbelievable dexterity. The scalp was stitched up and, although there seemed little sign of shock, a saline administered. Then Macewen tied the final suture.

"Thank you, gentlemen. That is all for this morning. In three days' time it may be necessary to drain accumulated fluid. Otherwise we look for an uneventful recovery."

The patient, her head swathed in a great turban of bandages, was wheeled out by the house surgeon and two nurses. The class began to leave the theater, not with the usual shuffling of boots and babble of tongues, but silently, as though overwhelmed. I let the others get away, remaining seated, in the pretense of making notes, in reality gathering my forces for the effort I meant to make. Macewen, attended by a nurse, showing no signs of fatigue or strain, was quietly washing up. Presently the nurse left him—he was alone.

I took a deep quick breath and went forward.

"Excuse me, sir. May I speak to you a moment?"

He turned, wiping his hands on the stiffly laundered towel.

"Certainly. . . . We are always prepared to listen to the young."

His tone, the indulgence in his gaze, gave me confidence. After all, I had done brilliantly in the examinations. In the wards my answers to his questions had seemed to interest him, and more than once my more daring flights of fancy had made him smile. All that I sought was the lowest position on his staff. Taking courage, I asked him for it.

For a moment he observed me.

"Why do you wish to be my dresser?"

In all sincerity I answered:

"I want to specialize in surgery."

Again there was a silence, a long silence. Then gently, yet firmly, he shook his head.

"No. I have already made the appointment."

His sharp eye remained bent upon me kindly, yet with that unerring judgment that never failed him.

"In medicine, or some other field, I believe that you may make your mark. But of one thing I am sure. You will never be a surgeon."

## CHAPTER 2

**LOCHLEA ASYLUM: WANTED:** *a clinical clerk. Board and lodging provided at the institution. Honorarium 100 guineas. Candidate appointed will be permitted to attend classes at the University.*

Two anxious and depressing weeks had passed since my rejection by Macewen when this notice, pinned on the board in the Students' Union, caught and held my desperate eye. Lest any of my needy friends should forestall me, I tore down Gilmore Hill, and boarded a green tramcar—one of the sedate and splendid vehicles which, in those days, bore the citizens of Glasgow immense distances for a single penny.

The asylum was dismayingly imposing—a great castellated mansion, set in well-tended gardens, surrounded by meadows and orchards, the whole domain encircled by a high stone wall.

I was admitted at the gate lodge and conducted up the long beech avenue by an attendant who brought me, finally, through an arched doorway and a vestibule, adorned by marble statuary, to the office of the superintendent.

Dr. Gavinton, acknowledged as one of the leading alienists of his time, was a tall, spare iron-gray man, gaunt and sallow-featured, with a quiet, rather baffling aloofness in his manner. Conscious of my deficiencies, sadly shaken in my self-esteem, I steeled myself for a painful interrogation. To my surprise, he repeated my name, mildly, then remarked:

"Are you related to the youngster who captained the eleven in the Scottish Shield three years ago?"

"Well, sir," I stammered, "as a matter of fact I . . ."

He nodded, his severity broken by a human and friendly smile.

"I saw the game. You played well. If the ground had been less muddy you might easily have won. Sit down. You'll find that chair reasonably comfortable."

I took a long breath, scarcely daring to believe in my good fortune—that this should be my reward for that grim defeat which had reduced me in the dressing room to bitter tears. Yet it was so. Frank Gavinton was a football enthusiast, and for half an hour we discussed football with the intimacy of those who know and love the game. Then, abruptly, he stood up, held out his hand.

"Report here tomorrow at nine o'clock. I know that you'll be punctual. Oh, by the way." He called me back. "We pay in advance here. You'd better have this . . . your first quarter's stipend."

Nothing could have been more supremely opportune than this appointment. With the check for 25 guineas which Dr. Gavinton handed me I settled my indebtedness to Mrs. Grant and got my watch out of pawn. My new quarters, a comfortable sitting room, with easy chairs and a fireplace, communicating with a snug, red-carpeted bedroom and bath, were, by contrast with the

wretched "digs" I had quitted, palatial. My diet was also greatly improved. Breakfast now consisted of cereal and cream—thick and fresh from the home farm—an inexhaustible platter of crisp bacon and eggs, fragrant coffee, fresh rolls, and fruit. Lunch, supper and tea—the latter brought to my sitting room every day at four o'clock—were equally bounteous. Add to this the privilege of dropping in at any hour to the great basement kitchen for a snack, and it becomes possible to imagine the change in circumstances and outlook for a famished youth who for weeks had been keeping body and soul together on an odd stale bun and an occasional mug of tea.

In the forenoon I was free to pursue my medical education at the University. For the rest, my duties in the clinic at Lochlea lacked neither interest nor variety. All the dispensing was under my charge, the measuring out of stock solutions of potassium, sodium and ammonium bromide, of chloral hydrate, paraldehyde and many other drugs which were widely used as sedatives. I undertook the bacteriological work and microscopic examinations of pathological specimens. I also had the rather odd duty of feeding those patients who refused to eat, an operation which demanded the passing of a stomach tube, a recondite art in which I soon became extremely proficient. In addition, I kept the case records and made the evening round of the galleries when one or another of the doctors had the day off. Most of all, at Dr. Gavinton's request, since he set a high therapeutic value on this line of treatment, I was expected to mingle with our patients in a social way, to organize their games, play tennis, cricket and handball with them, take part in the concerts and dances that were regularly held for their benefit and entertainment.

Lochlea was an advanced institution, one of the best in Scotland, and although it supported the usual quota of incurables, it received many "breakdown" cases, people thrown out of gear by the stress and strain of life. To heal and rehabilitate these patients, to see them go forth, fit to resume their daily avocations and take

their part in the battle of life—this was the main objective at Lochlea. It was in many ways a thrilling work. But there was danger in it, too.

Of all the inmates of Lochlea, the one to whom I had become most attached was George Blair. Known to everyone as Geordie, this young man had a history which, made more moving by his open and engaging disposition, particularly aroused my sympathy. Five years before he had killed his cousin—had, indeed, strangled him to death. Yet the circumstances of the crime seemed, to a certain extent, to exonerate the culprit. When we talked the matter over together—this process of self-revelation was always encouraged—Geordie confessed to me that the murdered youth had insulted his sister; had, indeed, tried physically to force his attentions upon her. It was this outrage that had temporarily unbalanced Blair: a fact which, with such an upright young fellow, was quite understandable. Certainly the verdict of the court had been "Guilty, while of unsound mind." Thus Geordie, sentenced to detention, found himself removed to Lochlea, where he must spend the rest of his days.

This burden of lifelong punishment, heavy and unjust though it seemed to me, had been accepted manfully by Blair, a fact which prejudiced me more strongly in his favor. No one in the place was more cheerful or energetic. He sang at the concerts in a fine baritone voice, led the church choir every Sunday. At the monthly assemblies he appeared in a dress kilt, was up for every dance, led the grand chain, was tremendous in the eight-some reels. Although somewhat short and thickset, he was endowed with a remarkable physique and took enthusiastic part in all the games organized at Lochlea. It was this, in the first place, which brought us together. Geordie and I had many rattling exchanges at tennis. Often on Saturday forenoon when I was free we took out a ball and punted it to each other in the recreation ground. He was such a likable fellow, so gay and virile—so obliging, too, going out of his way to perform many thought-



ful personal services for me—that I became extremely fond of him.

Indeed, I went so far as to bring his case before the superintendent. After the day's work, Gavinton was fond of a game of billiards and he often asked me to his house, where he had an excellent table. One evening when we were so engaged, I said to him: "It's very hard, sir, that Blair should be condemned to spend the rest of his life at Lochlea."

"Indeed." He chalked his cue. "Do you think so badly, then, of our little place here?"

"Oh, no, sir. It's . . . it's extremely pleasant in many ways. But after all . . . it's shut off from the world by a high stone wall."

"That wall serves a fairly useful purpose."

"Of course, sir. But surely not for Blair. He's such a decent chap. And he's had a rotten deal. Don't you think some sort of appeal could be made to the authorities?"

There was a silence during which Dr. Gavinton, stroking his upper lip with a characteristic gesture, gave me an odd look. Then he smiled faintly and, bending to take his shot, remarked: "My dear fellow, I think our friend Blair will do very well at Lochlea."

Of course, that closed the discussion. But I was not satisfied. I went out of my way to make things as pleasant as possible for my friend Geordie.

One evening, a few weeks after this conversation, I was on duty and I went to make the round of the men's galleries. I had been studying in my room, and it was almost 11 o'clock when I entered the ward kitchen where old Currie, the night attendant, was busy making a brew of hot Ovaltine, which, according to custom, he took to a number of the less robust patients. Currie was over 70, a steady-going, gray-bearded Highlander, bowed by age but still hearty, who for nearly 50 years had kept night watch in the galleries of Lochlea. I had enjoyed many chats

with Currie over a measure of his nourishing beverage, but tonight as he poured and handed me a cup he glanced at me sideways.

"Geordie had a nasty turn this evening. They've put him in Number Seven."

I gazed at him in amazement.

"Blair . . . in Number Seven?"

"Aye." Currie nodded. "He was real bad."

I could not understand. *Number Seven, in this gallery, was the padded cell.* I thought for an instant that the old man was joking, but the expression on his face dismissed that thought. Puzzled and distressed, I started out of the kitchen, still holding the cup of Ovaltine. If Blair were really ill, he might be glad to have it. As I went down the gallery I heard Currie call after me, but I paid no heed and, using my key, I let myself into Number Seven.

At that instant, before I had adjusted myself to the interior gloom, I received a smashing blow on the chest which jerked the hot Ovaltine into my eyes and threw me violently against the door, which instantly slammed shut. Almost blinded — the high, grilled roof light gave only the feeblest gleam — I nevertheless saw enough to recognize my danger and to realize what a fool I had been to incur it. There was raging mania in Blair's expression as he rushed at me again, tore the empty cup out of my hand, and smashed it down on my head.

"Geordie . . . for God's sake . . . don't you know who I am . . . ? Your friend . . ."

He did not answer but drove at me again. Then, with a shudder, I became aware that I was locked up with a homicidal lunatic in the place most dreaded in the whole asylum, a cell so isolated, so impervious to sound, that my cries for help would never reach the gallery.

A cold wave of fear and horror swept over me. I could feel the blood from my lacerated scalp trickling down my neck. But

at all costs I must try to defend myself. As Blair advanced I hit him with all my strength. Although the blow staggered him, I might as well have tried to halt a rushing bull.

I can lay no claim to be a fighter. Yet I had studied the art of self-defense and had sparred many rounds in the navy. Everything I had ever learned I brought out now with the intensity of desperation. Keeping away from Blair as best I could, I hit him repeatedly with a straight left and crossed my right to the jaw. He was an easy target, making no effort to guard himself, yet all that I could do failed to stop him. Normally he had far greater strength than I, and in his present state of dementia—a state which, while rendering the nervous system impervious to pain, excites the muscles to their highest pitch of action—he completely outmatched me. Again and again he charged in with flailing arms and, although many of his wild swings missed, the weight of these attacks was overwhelming. Utterly spent, I felt my head turn giddy as, with a final rush, he hurled himself upon me and flung me to the floor. Sick and dizzy, I was conscious of his fingers on my throat, compressing my windpipe, choking the breath from my body. Sparks shot before my eyes as I recollected dimly how he had throttled his cousin.

At that second, while my senses swam, I vaguely heard the door burst open and, as in a dream, saw Currie, followed by two young male attendants from the adjoining gallery, dash into the cell. Even as they threw themselves on Blair and the agonizing pressure on my throat relaxed, I realized that old Currie, by going first for adequate help rather than coming to the cell himself, had saved my life. And then I fainted.

Later that night Dr. Gavinton put ten stitches in my head—I still have the scar—and for days afterward my throat was so painful I could scarcely swallow.

One morning in the following month, as I walked down the avenue to attend a lecture at the University, a gay and cheerful greeting made me turn my head. It was Geordie—brisk, smiling,

affectionate as ever. As I stood there he ran up to me and warmly, glowingly, shook my hand.

"How are you, my dear fellow? Wonderful to see you again. . . . You know, I hated to have to knock you out. But really, it was very wrong of you to make such horrible proposals to my sister."

I stared at him aghast, but had wit enough to mutter: "I'm terribly sorry, Geordie. . . . I was carried away. . . . I'll never do it again."

Often, after that, Geordie begged me to play tennis with him or stood disconsolately with the football hoping for the resumption of our Saturday games. But during the remainder of my sojourn at Lochlea I was wise enough to keep my distance.

Shall I say that I had learned never to trust a man who believes he has a sister, when he happens to be an only child.

### CHAPTER 3

"LOOK, my dear! Did you ever in your life see such an absurdly comic creature!"

A smartly dressed woman passenger on the *SS Rawalpindar*, about to sail from Liverpool on the long voyage to Calcutta, made this remark in a high, "well-bred" voice to her companion, a young man with a military yet foppish air. Following their amused gaze, my eyes came to rest upon a squat, very ugly native seaman, with short legs and a large disproportionate head, marred by a cicatrix which ran from ear to temple, whom I recognized as the Indian serang, or quartermaster of the ship. He was quietly superintending the crew of lascars now completing the loading of baggage into the hold from the Mersey lighter alongside.

"Looks hardly human," the man agreed, twisting his embryonic mustache. "Inclines a chap to believe, don't you know, that old Darwin was not altogether wrong . . . what?"

I turned away silently and went below to my cabin. Three weeks

before, to my inexpressible joy, I had taken my medical degree. Never shall I forget that breathless moment when I discovered, not only that I had passed, but that the examining board had given me honors as well.

And then, as if this were not enough, I had been fortunate enough, through the good offices of one of my professors, Ralph Stockman, to be appointed temporary ship's doctor on the *Rawalpindar*.

While he was putting me through my medical "oral," Stockman had decided that I was extremely run-down, that the trip to India and back would set me up again.

The voyage began favorably in calm, clear weather. The *Rawalpindar* was a stout old tub, manned by white officers, with an entirely native Indian crew. She was exceedingly slow—capable, indeed, of a bare ten knots. This, however, was no defect to the young physician, for whom every day was an added source of sheer delight.

The ship was crowded, packed with the usual tourists and pleasure seekers, as well as cotton and jute merchants bound for Calcutta and Bombay, Ceylon tea planters and Cawnpore mill-owners, together with a large number of Anglo-Indian army officers, many of whom were accompanied by their wives and families. From the first night out there was tremendous gaiety on board. Lunch and cocktail parties, sweepstakes on the ship's run, "horse racing" and deck sports of every kind, impromptu concerts and fancy-dress galas—these were but a few of the diversions. For such junkets the ship's doctor is always in demand, and although my inclination lay to more meditative ways, I was usually drawn into the festivities.

Chief among the social promoters—those people who on ship-board excel at "getting things up"—was Miss Jope-Smith, the woman whom I had overheard on the boat deck the morning of our departure and who, with her brother Ronald, a cavalry subaltern, sat, unfortunately, at my table in the dining saloon.

Madge Jope-Smith was not only a snob but a bore. She talked incessantly of her "place" in Cheltenham, her titled friends, her "personal maid," her horses, dogs, and exploits in the field of fox hunting. The leitmotiv of her conversation, reduced to its elemental note, was the superiority of the English upper classes and the need for impressing this upon the subject native races. She constantly abused the table steward, a nice Parsi boy who was well-meaning but slow and, having scolded him into complete confusion, she would cast her bold glance around the table.

"These people have to be kept down, you know. Don't you agree, Ronnie?"

"By Jove, yes." Her brother, quite innocuous, was a dependable echo. "You're absolutely right."

We reached Port Said. Everyone went ashore, excitedly, came back loaded with purchases from Simon Artz, with silks, shawls, cigarettes, scent and jewelry. That night, as we glided past the de Lesseps statue into the snaky waters of the Suez Canal, the orchestra played louder than ever, the dance waxed faster and more furious. The desert reached away on either hand, camels and Bedouin encampments were silhouetted against the purple sunset.

On the following morning, as I held my consultations in the surgery, the serang, Hasan, appeared, bringing with him two of his lascar deck hands. Waiting in the doorway until I bade him enter, he inclined his head in a respectful salaam and addressed me.

"Doctor Sahib, I fear these men are sick."

The seamen certainly did not look well; they complained of general malaise, of intense headache and racking bone pains. They looked frightened, too, as though suspecting something serious to be amiss, rolling the whites of their eyes as I asked them to strip and began my examination. Both were fevered, with thickly furred tongues and that dry skin, burning to the touch, which is one of nature's gravest warnings. Instinctively I thought of ma-

laria. But then, to my horror, as I took the pulse, my palpating fingers became aware of a scattering of hard little nodules, exactly like lead shot, under the wrist skin of each man. It was an unmistakable symptom and, inspecting more closely the areas behind the knees and beneath the armpits, I found in each case a definite papular eruption.

Young and inexperienced in my profession, I had not yet acquired that dissimulation which masks the sentence of death with a comforting smile. My expression must have altered visibly for, although the serang said nothing, his lined and battered face assumed a look of deeper gravity. For a moment I looked into his eyes and, realizing that he knew as well as I the nature of the malady before us, I could not but experience, as a kind of shock, the resolution, the intrepid calmness of his gaze. Still he said nothing. When I told him in a low voice to wait in the surgery with the men, he again simply inclined his head.

Hurriedly, with pounding heart, I made my way to the bridge. Captain Hamble was not there but in the chartroom below. He looked up sharply as I burst in.

"Sir" — my voice broke — "I have to report smallpox on board. Two of the deck hands."

I saw his lips draw tightly together. He was a thickset man of 55, with close-cropped hair and sandy, bushy eyebrows, known as a strict disciplinarian, but also as a just and fair-minded officer. Now his brick-dust complexion assumed a deeper tinge.

"Smallpox." He repeated the word under his breath. "You're sure?"

"Quite, sir." And I added, "We have no lymph in our medical supplies."

He bit his lip angrily and, frowning deeply, began to pace up and down the narrow chartroom.

"Doctor," he said, drawing up at last and coming close to me, his words unmistakably grim, "you are in charge of the health of the ship. It's entirely up to you. I can't give you any of my

officers; I'm overloaded and understaffed. But I am going to give you the serang. He understands these fellows. And, believe me, he's the finest man I have. Between you, you've got to keep this thing from spreading. And, what's more, don't let a whisper of it get out, or with this fancy lot we have on board we'll have a bloody panic, as sure as God's my Maker."

I left the chartroom, realizing, with a weakness in my stomach, the desperate responsibility of my position. Gone now was the carefree ease I had enjoyed, reclining in a deck chair reading Pierre Loti and dreaming romantically of my own secret desire to write, treating nothing more serious than a cut finger or a case of mild seasickness. Here we were, in the middle of the Arabian Sea, 1500 passengers aboard, no means whatever of vaccinating them, and smallpox . . . the most deadly contagion in the whole dictionary of disease.

Back in the surgery one of the lascars was in the grip of a violent rigor. I turned from the shivering man to the serang, whose incalculable eyes remained fixed upon me.

"You know?" I asked him.

"Yes, Sahib. I have seen this before."

"We've got to isolate these men . . . check on the contacts. . . ." As I spoke, trying to assume a cheerfulness and confidence I did not feel, Hasan quietly acquiesced.

"Yes, Sahib . . . I shall do what I can to help you."

There was no sick bay on board, not an inch of available cabin space. One look at the crowded forecabin showed the impossibility of segregating the infected men anywhere in the crew's quarters.

"We will make a shelter on the afterdeck, Doctor Sahib," the serang said. "Very cool there. With plenty of fresh air."

In the stern of the ship, admirably protected from view by a battery of derricks and donkey engines, he set to work. Within an hour, he had erected, with silent efficiency, a large canvas shelter, tautly secured and roped off from the surrounding deck.



Mattresses and sheets were then brought up and the two patients comfortably installed. Our next step was to muster the crew for a thorough medical inspection. One of the stokers, who complained of fever and headache, showed the beginnings of the typical rash. He was isolated with the other cases.

"And now . . . who is going to help me attend to these men?"

Hasan glanced at me in surprise.

"Why, naturally it is I."

"You must be careful. This disease is most contagious."

"I am not afraid, Doctor Sahib."

Together, Hasan and I sponged the patients with permanganate solution, administered to each man a strong antipyretic, hung sheets soaked in disinfectant round the shelter, and set up within this little secret area of quarantine a cooking stove where liquids could be heated and simple meals prepared. Finally, while the passengers were at lunch, we cleared the night watch from the forecabin and, with some sulphur candles which Hasan disinterred from the ship's stores, thoroughly fumigated the crew's quarters. With this accomplished, I felt somewhat easier in my mind.

At the muster which I held at daybreak next morning, however, I found three fresh cases. The men already segregated were much worse, covered from head to toe by that eruption which is a symptom of the disease. And that same afternoon, four more of the crew sickened. We now had ten cases in our makeshift lazaretto. It was a situation to test the strongest nerves. But the serang, calm and unperturbed, his eyes steadfast beneath the misshapen frontal bones of his dark, cicatrized face, gave me fresh heart. Merely to be beside him made it difficult to despair. In tending the patients he was indefatigable, giving them water, relieving their intolerable skin irritation with the lotion I had made up, cooking for them on the makeshift galley, always on hand when I needed him to help me lift and sponge a semi-conscious man—and all this carried out with complete and contemptuous disregard for his own safety.

"Be careful of yourself," I had to beg him. "Do not go quite so close."

Now, indeed, he showed his strong teeth, stained with betel nut, in a sudden, fleeting smile, tinged with such native sadness that it broke only for an instant his deep and natural tranquillity.

"Are you careful of yourself, Doctor Sahib?"

"Indeed I am. Besides, this is my work."

"Do not worry, Doctor Sahib. I am strong. And it is my work, too."

By this time, except for emergency calls, I had placed myself more or less in quarantine. To allay suspicion, it was given out that I had caught a chill and was indisposed. I ceased to go to the dining saloon, and all my meals were brought on a tray to my cabin. In the evening, as I sat at my solitary dinner, hearing the music of the string band and the sway and shuffle of the dancers on the deck above, it was difficult to restrain a mood of bitterness. Morbidly I watched my own person for the first sign of the disease, not from fear—oddly, I was so weighed down by responsibility that I had slight concern for myself—but with a queer detachment and the conviction that I would contract the malady. And in this state of heightening tension I cursed the slowness of the ship, that lack of speed which had previously given me cause for satisfaction. Although we were moving full steam ahead, Colombo, the nearest port of call, was still eight days away.

In the course of the next 48 hours four more stokers went to join the others on the afterdeck. A total of 14 now. And one of the earlier victims had lapsed into coma, seemed likely to die at any hour. Under this added load, I could not sleep and, though I spent most of the daylight hours in the lazaretto, even at night I could not keep away from the stern of the ship. And there, where I knew I should find him, watchful and mute under the stars, was the *serang*.

How shall I describe the solace which flowed toward me from



him as he stood there, in meditation, silhouetted against the taffrail, with his long arms folded on his bared chest, motionless as a statue? A silver whistle, symbol of his office, hung by a lanyard from his muscular neck. The tropic moon, rolling in the velvet sky, brought out the deep lines on his face which had the immobility of carved ebony. When a sick man groaned faintly with the pain of his tormented universe, he would step forward, without sound, to succor him.

He had no fondness for speech. But despite the silences of our long night vigils I gathered, gradually, some fragments of his history. He had, as a boy, taken to a seafaring life. For nearly 40 years he had given himself to the oceans of the world, and 15 of these years had been spent on the *Rawalpindar*. Small wonder he regarded the old ship as his home. He had never married. The tackle block which, falling from the masthead, had so frightfully broken and disfigured his features had turned his thoughts from women.

By religion he was a Jain, yet there was in him something far beyond the teaching of the sects, a faith inculcated by the purifying eternal wind, the beauty and the desolation of great waters, by the united mysteries of a thousand landfalls and departures.

In all his life he had acquired nothing, neither property nor money—his few possessions, contained in his ship chest, might be worth a few rupees. The thought hurt me and, in an access of mistaken sympathy, I exclaimed: "Hasan, you are doing so much in this emergency, the company must give you extra pay."

His forehead creased perplexedly. He was silent for a long moment, a silence broken only by the slow thud of the propeller shaft and the wheezing rattle of the sick. Then he answered: "What use is money, Doctor Sahib, to one who has all he needs? I am well enough the way I am."

Standing with him, in the liquid moonlight, I was stung by a strange pang. Beside his clear simplicity the world's values suddenly seemed dross. Indeed, as I viewed my own outlook

toward the future, my passionate desire for success and wealth, I was conscious of a secret shame. From the sighing emptiness of the night, there came to me the echo of those immortal words: "O ye of little faith! Take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?"

On the following day we lost two of our patients. It was Hasan himself who sewed their shrouds, who in his hoarse and hollow voice read aloud a short prayer before their bodies, wrapped in sailcloth, with a weight at their feet, were cast overboard at midnight.

No fresh cases developed. And a week later, in the sulphurous light of early dawn, we anchored off Colombo. Before the first of the passengers was awake, the port doctor had completed his inspection and the yellow quarantine flag had been lowered. Several of the patients showed signs of having passed the crisis, but three, helpless and delirious, a mass of running sores, were carried to the lighter, like children, in the arms of Hasan. As we stood together, watching the flat launch bobbing toward the shore, I saw that the serang's dark cheeks were wet with tears.

I had barely time to recover myself, or to realize that the epidemic had been confined, before we had navigated the mud flats of the Hooghly and were anchored alongside the quay at Calcutta. A general celebration marked our arrival — sirens blowing, favors floating in the breeze, final rounds of drinks, the decks crowded with people waving and shouting greetings to friends meeting them on the dock. Suddenly, at my elbow, I heard the familiar shrilling of Miss Jope-Smith.

"Oh, look, look, Ronnie. There's that absurd creature again."

Once more I followed their united gaze. And there, again, down in the afterhold, knocking out the hatch battens to unload the baggage, his squat figure foreshortened from above, with long arms swinging, more ungainly than ever, was the object of their mirth — Hasan.

The lady from Cheltenham swung round, bent her wit, her fascinations upon me.

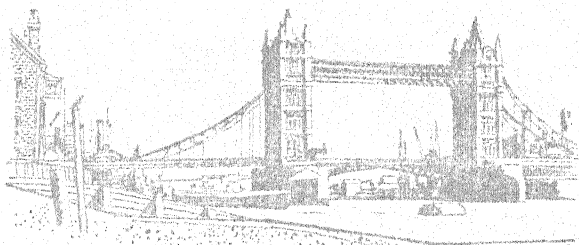
"Where did you keep him all the voyage, Doctor, dear? In a special cage?"

Silence—a vision of the serang's nobility rising before me.

"Yes . . . in a way . . . it was a cage. . . . But isn't it queer, Miss Jope-Smith—the animals were all outside."

Though I kept my voice even, I thought that I should suffocate. Abruptly I turned away, went below to my cabin and beat my clenched fists hard against the wooden bulkhead.

## CHAPTER 4



AT THE END of the voyage home, Captain Hamble had pressed me to remain with the *Rawalpindar* but at the same time had honestly advised me against lapsing into a routine which, to his knowledge, had turned many an eager and ambitious young man into a lazy and lackadaisical ship's surgeon. I was fully aware of the sound sense in Hamble's warning, and hearing from a classmate at the University that there was an assistantship vacant in Tannochbrae in Scotland—"Not much, mind you . . . Regular country practice . . . and he's a hard nut, old Cameron, though a rare good sort at heart"—I had, not without reluctance, quitted my berth in the ship.

THE RAIN dripped miserably as my cab swung into the drive of Dr. Cameron's residence and surgery, Arden House, a soundly built white stone dwelling with a coach house at the side and a semicircular spread of lawn in front. I sprang up the front steps

and rang the bell. After a minute, the door opened and the housekeeper, a thin, elderly woman, dressed entirely in black, confronted me. Her hair was tightly drawn, and in her bleak face was stamped authority mingled with a certain grudging humanity. For a few seconds she inspected me, my bag, my hat, even my boots; then, with a slight elevation of her brows, my luxurious background of horse and cab.

"Ye've a cab!" she observed severely. "Well! I suppose you'd better come in. Don't forget to wipe your feet."

I dutifully wiped my feet and went in, feeling that I had made a bad beginning.

She showed me into a big, comfortable room—the dining room, it was—with warm red curtains and red Turkey carpet, a blazing coal fire, and furniture of sound mahogany. A big bowl of apples on the dresser, a full glass barrel of biscuits, and whisky in the square-cut decanter. No pictures, no photographs, but, of all things, three yellow violins hanging on the walls. A good—oh, a decent room to live in. I was warming myself at the blaze when the door opened and Cameron came stamping in.

"That's right," said Cameron, without a handshake or a word of preamble, "warm your backside at the fire while I work myself to death outside. Janet! Janet!"—at the pitch of his lungs—"Bring in our tea."

He was a medium-sized oldish man with a face beaten bright crimson by Scots weather and Scots whisky, and a pugnacious little gray imperial, now dewed with raindrops. He stooped slightly, so that his head had a forward, belligerent thrust. He wore gaiters, cord breeches, and a big, baggy tweed jacket of a nondescript, vaguely greenish color, the side pockets stuffed to the bursting point with everything from an apple to a gum-elastic catheter. About him there hung invariably the odor of drugs, carbolic and strong tobacco.

Obtaining a good three quarters of the fire, he inspected me sideways and asked abruptly:

"Are ye strong? Sound in wind and limb?"

"I hope so!"

"Married?"

"Not yet."

"Thank God! Can ye play the fiddle?"

"No!"

"Neither can I—but I can make them bonny. Do ye smoke a pipe?"

"I do!"

"Humph! Do ye drink whisky?"

My dander had been rising under this interrogation. I don't like you, I thought, as I looked at the odd, unprofessional figure beside me, and I never will. I answered surlily:

"I drink what I like, and when I like!"

The spark of a smile gleamed in Cameron's eye.

"It might be worse," he murmured, and then: "Sit in and have your tea."

Janet had swiftly and silently set the table—cake, buns, toast, preserve, brown bread, home-baked scones, cheese and bannocks—and now, with the big brown teapot, she brought in a huge dish of cold ham and poached eggs.

"There's no falderals in this house," Cameron explained briefly as he poured the tea—he had beautiful hands, I noticed, hard-skinned yet supple. "Breakfast, middle-day dinner, high tea, and supper—plain food and plenty. We work our assistant here, but—by your leave—we don't starve him."

We were well through the meal when Janet came in with more hot water. Only then did she say impassively:

"There's a man been waiting this last half hour—young Lachlan Mackenzie, him that has the steading up Inverbeg way. His bairn's badly, he makes out."

Cameron arrested a piece of oatcake halfway to his mouth to let out his favorite oath:

"Dammit to hell!" he cried, "and we up at Inverbeg this mor-



nin' and passed his very door. Th'infernal eediot! I'll wager the child's been sick for days. Do they all think I'm made of steel?" He checked himself. Then, with a sigh which seemed to let off all his boiling steam, he added in quite a different voice, "All right, Janet. All right. Let him come in here the now."

In a moment Mackenzie stood in the doorway. "It's the boy, Doctor," he muttered, twisting his cap. "The wife thinks it's the croup. He's been poorly for two days—but we didna' think it was the croup. . . ."

"Aye, aye, Lachlan. The croup! Just so, just so." A pause. "All right, man! Don't ye worry. Away with Janet now and have your tea while the gig's bein' got round."

Silence in the dining room when he had gone. Cameron reflectively stirred his tea. Almost apologetically he said: "I can't be hard on a poor devil like that. It's a weakness I never seem to get over. He owes me for his wife's last confinement—he'll never pay it. But I'll get out the gig, drive seven miles, see the child, drive seven miles back. And what do ye think I'll mark against him in the book? One and six—if I don't forget. And what does it matter if I do forget? He'll never pay me a red bawbee in any case. What a life for a man who loves fiddles!"

Silence again; then I ventured: "Shall I do the call?"

Cameron took a long pull at his tea. The bright satire was back in his eye as he said: "That's a braw wee black bag ye've got—aye, I see it on the sofa—brand-new and shiny, with your stethoscope and all the new contrivances inside, bonny and complete. No wonder ye're fair itchin' to use it." He looked me straight in the face. "All right! Ye can go. But let me warn you, my lad, in a practice like mine it's not the bag that matters—it's the man!" He got up. "Do the call then, and take some antitoxin with ye to be safe. It's on the right-hand shelf as ye go in the back room. Here! I'll show ye. I'm not wantin' ye to drive seven miles to find out that croup is liable to mean diphtheria."

The gig was waiting outside the front porch, with Lachlan al-

ready in the back — the young fellow had walked the seven miles into the village — and Jamie, the groom, stood ready with the waterproof sheet. We set off through the wet, blustery night.

It was bad, bad going. The road was dark, too, the gig lamps so blurred by a film of mud that Jamie had difficulty in keeping the horse upon the road. We went on through the pitch blackness and the rain in silence. Finally we stopped at a small steading where a single illuminated window seemed somehow swamped and hopeless in the great void of sodden blackness.

As we climbed out of the gig, Lachlan's wife opened the door. She looked no more than a girl despite her clumsy sacking apron and uncouth brogues. A coil of hair fell carelessly down her neck, and her big eyes were dark and youthful against the anxious pallor of her face. She helped me out of my wet coat in silence; then, though she still said not a word, her worried eye indicated the kitchen bed. I walked over to it, my boots squelching on the stone-flagged floor.

A little boy of three lay tossing under a single blanket, his brow damp with sweat, his face completely livid as he gasped for breath. With my finger I depressed the child's tongue. Yes! The whole of the fauces covered with thick membrane. Laryngeal diphtheria!

"I've made him some gruel, Doctor," the mother murmured, "but he doesna . . . doesna seem to fancy it."

"He can't swallow," I said. Because I was nervous my voice sounded unsympathetic, even harsh.

"Is he bad then, doctor?" she whispered, with a hand at her breast.

Bad! I thought. She doesn't dream how bad he is! There was no doubt at all — the child was dying. How horrible, I thought, that this should be my first case.

I opened my bag, filled my big syringe, and gave the child 8000 units of antidiphtheritic serum. To gain time I went back to the fire. What was I to do? I knew very well what I should do. But I was afraid. I returned to the bed. If anything, the boy was worse.

In half an hour, before the serum could act, he would be dead from obstruction of the windpipe. Another wave of fear came over me. I had to make up my mind. I felt myself so young, so utterly inept and inexperienced in the face of the great elemental forces which surged within the room. I faced round, and in a manner wholly unimpressive I said:

"The boy has diphtheria. The membrane is blocking the larynx. There's only one thing to do. Operate. Open the windpipe below the obstruction."

The mother wrung her hands, and screamed:

"Oh, no, Doctor, no!"

At a word from me, Jamie lifted the almost senseless child onto the scrubbed pine table. Lachlan cried weakly, "I'll away and put the horse in the stable." Blubbering, he rushed out.

Now the mother had recovered herself. Pale as a ghost, her hands clenched fiercely, she looked at me.

"Tell me what to do, and I'll do it."

"Stand there and hold his head back tight!"

I swabbed the skin of the child's throat with iodine. I took a clean towel and laid it across those glazing eyes. The case was now far beyond an anesthetic. Jamie was holding the oil lamp near. Setting my teeth, I picked up the lancet. I made the incision with a steady hand, but I felt my legs trembling beneath me. I must go deeper, deeper—go boldly in, yet watch all the time for the jugular vein. I widened the incision, using the blunt end of the scalpel, searching desperately for the white cartilage of the trachea. The child, roused by pain, struggled like a fish in a strangling net. God! Would I never find it? I cursed myself in spirit. The child would die; they would say that I had killed him. Beads of sweat broke out on my brow, as I remembered, suddenly, Mac-ewen's fatal words: "*You will never be a surgeon.*"

The child's breathing was terrible now, thin, infrequent. The neck veins were engorged, the throat livid, the face blackening. Not a minute longer, I thought! He's finished, and so am I. For

one sickening instant I had a quick vision of the cold, immaculate precision of the Infirmary theater, and then, by frightful contrast, this struggling, desperate thing dying under my knife upon a kitchen table by the flare of an oil lamp, while the wind howled and stormed outside. Oh, God, I prayed, help me, help me now.

Under my searching knife the thin white tube sprang into view. Swiftly I incised it, and in the instant the child's gasping ceased. Instead, a long clear breath of air went in through the opening. Another — another. The cyanosis vanished, the pulse strengthened. Swept by a terrific reaction, I felt that I was going to collapse. Afraid to move, I kept my head down to hide the smarting tears that sprang into my eyes. I've done it, I thought; oh, God, I've done it after all!

Later I slipped the tiny silver tracheotomy tube into the opening and lifted the boy back to bed. The temperature had fallen a point and a half. I sat by the bedside, watching, cleaning the tube. From time to time the mother replenished the fire so silently she was like a shadow in the room. Jamie and Lachlan were asleep upstairs. At five in the morning I gave another 4000 units of serum. At six the child was sleeping, far less restive than before. At seven I rose and stretched myself. Smiling, I said:

"He'll do now, I expect!" And I explained to the mother the method of cleaning out the tube. "In ten days it'll all be healed up good as new."

It was close on nine when, tired, unshaven, and clutching the mud-splashed bag, I stumbled into the dining room of Arden House. Cameron was there, fresh as a new pin, whistling a little tune softly. He looked me up and down; then, with a dry twinkle in his eye, before I could speak he declared:

"There's one guid thing has happened anyway! Ye've taken the newness off your bag."

## CHAPTER 5

TANNOCHBRAE, as the spring came, lost all its bleakness. Wrapped in soft airs, the blue sky feathered by fleecy clouds, the cottage gardens filled with the scent of honeysuckle and the hum of bees, the hillsides alive with the bleating of lambs, the village became a sweet and pleasant place. Trout were leaping in the mountain burns, and whenever I had a spare hour I sought them with all the throbbing eagerness of an insatiable fisherman. I was happy in my work, becoming attached to my crusty old colleague, free, on my occasional day off, to travel to Glasgow to visit the girl I could not forget, who still was attending medical classes at the University. I even felt myself winning some faint signs of favor from our primly disapproving housekeeper when, unfortunately, I was involved in a serious and most worrying dispute.

In May an outbreak of scarlet fever occurred in the district, affecting chiefly the children, and it showed no signs of abating in the ordinary way. As the days passed, and one case followed another despite all our efforts at treatment and isolation, I lost patience and told myself I must get to the root of the matter. Some specific factor was disseminating the disease and I pledged myself to find it.

At the outset I realized that I could expect little help from the public-health authorities. At this time the medical officer of health to the county was Dr. Snoddie, a rather self-important practitioner who had married a Knoxhill woman, a rich widow slightly older than himself. Since his marriage he had set out to cultivate the best "county" families. He wore a cutaway coat and kept a brougham. He had come to regard his public office as a sinecure and was content to draw his honorarium of 50 guineas a year without in the least exerting himself to earn it.

There was one point common to all the cases I had met, and that

was the milk supply, which came in every instance from the farm adjacent to Tannochbrae known as Shawhead. I was convinced that the Shawhead milk was the origin of the epidemic. I had no proof, of course, merely a suspicion, but it was enough to make me resolve to act. One day, as I was passing Shawhead, I drew up the gig and called in at the farm.

It was a pretty place, with whitewashed farm buildings against which rambler roses were already beginning to bloom. Everything was sweet and clean, the surrounding fields well cared for and in good heart.

Small wonder it was that Rob Hendry should be so proud to own this fine dairy and the pedigreed Ayrshire herd which often won him prizes at the local show. Known colloquially as Shawhead — taking the name from the land that was his patrimony — Rob was a big, craggy man of about 50, with iron-gray hair. Shawhead's whole life was bound up in two interests: his farm and his young wife, Jean, whom he had recently married and whom, for all his dourness, he plainly adored.

When I knocked, it was Jean herself who answered, and at my question she smiled and shook her head.

"No," she answered, "the good man's out. He's gone to Ardfillan market with some calves. He'll not be back till this afternoon."

She was a bonny lass, with pink cheeks and fine coppery hair braided trimly behind her ears. Not more than 23, she had an appealing air of innocence. As I surveyed her against the background of the well-kept steading, the suspicions I had formed began to waver.

"So Shawhead's out," I temporized.

"Aye," she answered, "but he'll be home the back of four. Will you look in then, or is there any message I could give him?"

I hesitated.

"As a matter of fact, Mrs. Hendry, it's rather an awkward business I've come about. This outbreak of scarlet fever . . . It's spreading, you know, and I find that in all my cases . . . well,

not to put too fine a point on it — the milk has come from Shawhead. I want to be quite open with you. I wondered if I might look into things and see if, by any chance, the cause of the trouble might be here."

At my words, her frank expression altered. Her face clouded. "The fever!" she cried indignantly. "To mention it even . . . in the same breath as our good milk! To be sure, Doctor, if it's that you've come about, you'd better see the master."

And without further parley she closed the door in my face.

Discouraged by this setback, I got back to the gig and continued my morning round. I had half a mind to let the matter drop, but at the next house when I found that one of my fever cases had taken a turn for the worse, and that his brother showed signs of sickening with the complaint, I felt I could not abandon my original purpose. At midday, I mentioned my intention to Dr. Cameron. Cameron listened; then the corners of his mouth drew down dubiously.

"It looks like the milk," he said slowly. "And yet I can't think it, either. Shawhead has a model place out there." He paused. "Go and see him, by all means, but be careful how you set about it. He's a touchy deevil, and his temper's like tinder."

That afternoon I returned to Shawhead farm and knocked once again. There was no immediate answer, so I wandered across the yard into the dairy, which, however, was empty. I then turned into the cow barn.

Leaning against the doorway, I observed the fine, sleek animals in the stalls. I then watched the barnman, David Orr, known familiarly as Davit, take the three-legged stool and, sitting close to the first animal, begin the milking.

My eyes dwelt in a kind of fascination upon Davit, for he had a pale and sickly look, and round his throat was wrapped a twist of red flannel. Advancing cautiously, I greeted him.

"It's you, Doctor!" said Davit. "I'd no idea you were here. Are you after a glass of milk?"

Unsmiling, I shook my head. "I'll have no milk today, Davit." And then, indicating the red flannel casually, "What's like the matter with your neck?"

Davit paused in his milking and gave a self-conscious laugh.

"Oh, it's nothing—nothing at all, ye ken. I had a sore throat some weeks past, and it's left me kind of poorly, but it's nothing at all."

My gaze became more intent.

"A sore throat!" I echoed; then slowly, "Did you have any rash, Davit, with the sore throat that ye had?"

"Rash?" echoed Davit stupidly. "And what in the name of wonder might that be?"

I made to explain, to press my inquiries; then all at once I caught sight of Davit's hands and stopped short. Now there was no need to seek further. The answer came from Davit's hands, so busily employed in milking the cow, for from each of those hands fine particles of skin were peeling.

The evidence was conclusive—the fine powdery scaling, like a dust of bran, which invariably follows scarlet fever, and which, coupled with the fact of the sore throat, convinced me beyond all shadow of doubt that Davit had had the disease in ambulant form and that he had not only contaminated the milk, but had almost certainly infected the udders of the cows.

Suddenly a loud voice broke the stillness of the barn.

"So you're here, are you? Spying around into other people's business?"

Shawhead himself had appeared, dark with anger. Behind him stood his wife, gazing resentfully at me. I could not possibly avoid the issue.

"I'm sorry, Shawhead. I'm not here from choice." I pointed to the staring barnman. "Davit here has had scarlet fever, probably a slight attack, but enough to do a lot of damage." I tempered my words as best I could. "It looks as if you might have to shut up your dairy for a week or two."



"Shut up my dairy!" Shawhead exclaimed. "You must be mad."

"Be reasonable," I pleaded. "You're not to blame. But the fact remains, it's here the infection has come from."

"The infection! How dare you, man. We're all clean folks in this farm."

"Yes, but Davit . . ."

"Davit's as clean as the rest of us," cried Shawhead. "He's had a bit sore throat and no more. He's better now."

"I tell you," I persisted, with as much patience as I could muster, "that he has had scarlet fever. He's scaling all over his body. That's what is contaminating your milk."

Here the veins on Shawhead's forehead stood out. He could not contain himself.

"That's enough! My fine milk contaminated! It's pure sweet milk, and always has been. Don't you know we drink it ourselves?"

And in an excess of indignation he took the dipper and plunged it in the milk. Raising the brimming measure in a gesture of defiance, he drank half himself, then gave the rest to Jean.

"There!" He flung down the dipper. "That'll show you. And if you speak another word you'll bitterly regret it."

I understood the farmer's wounded pride, but I had my duty. I turned away in silence.

That afternoon I went to the house of Dr. Snoddie in Knoxhill and asked that he take steps immediately, in his official capacity to meet the situation.

The health officer, seated at his desk, inspected me over his gold-rimmed pince-nez. He had little love for Dr. Cameron and was obviously pleased that I had come to seek a favor of him.

"I'll look into it, of course," he remarked in a patronizing tone. "But, frankly, I cannot see that you have any real grounds for your request. There's no positive evidence — no rash, no fever, nothing but a mere supposition on your part. You must remember that it is an extremely serious matter to shut down a man's business on what may be merely unfounded conjecture."

I flushed hotly. "Conjecture be hanged! That farm is the focus of the trouble. I'll swear to it."

"Indeed!" said Dr. Snoddie, with an astringent smile. "Well, we shall see. You'll hear from me in the course of a day or so."

For 24 hours nothing happened; then, on the day following, as we sat at lunch, the expected note was delivered by hand.

I read it, then passed the paper to Dr. Cameron, who studied it, gazed at me covertly, and sighed:

"It's what you might expect of friend Snoddie. But what can we do? If he won't close we must sit tight and hope for the best."

"And find ourselves with a dozen more cases? No, thanks!" I spoke with sudden violence. "If we can't get official action, we'll do it the other way."

"Now, be careful," remonstrated Cameron. "He's a dangerous man, is Shawhead."

"No more dangerous than his milk." And before Cameron could reply I walked out of the room.

In the course of my visits during that day and the next I asked my patients to refrain from using the Shawhead milk supply. Despite my vexation, and a burning sense of being ill-used and misunderstood, I spoke with discretion. But far from being treated as a confidence, in no time at all the news went round the district.

The resultant storm thoroughly dismayed me. All the excitement which local controversy arouses in a small community was in active operation. People took sides, tongues wagged, the dispute became the chief topic of interest in the district.

Sustained but little by the consciousness that I was in the right, I could do no more than stick grimly to my guns. But on the Friday of the same week a document arrived which shook me even more severely. It was no less than a writ issued by the farmer through Logan and Logan, Knoxhill solicitors, for slander. Shawhead was "having the law on me."

As the days went on and I became more fully aware of my position, realizing that I must go into open court to face the charges

laid against me, with my reputation hanging upon the decision that was to be given, I was far from confident.

I found people looking at me oddly, even in the streets of Knox-hill. Dr. Snoddie, driving past in his brougham, avoided my gaze with an obviousness which told me I should receive no support from him.

And then, late one afternoon, as I sat moodily in the surgery, worrying over all that had passed and all that must so shortly take place, Dr. Cameron came in with a strange expression upon his face.

"Have you heard?" He spoke in a low, restrained tone. "She's down with it. Acute scarlet fever. Shawhead's wife, Jean Hendry herself."

One astounded instant. Then a terrific wave of vindication swept over me. In a flash I remembered Shawhead's defiant gesture as he passed the dipper of milk.

"They'll never go on with the case now," Cameron meditated. "They tell me Shawhead's near off his head with anxiety. It's a judgment."

The village gasped at the turn of events, and allowing due sympathy for Shawhead, opinion swung round like a weathercock in a change of wind. I became at one stroke protector of the people and the public health of Tannochbrae. But I would have none of the congratulations which folks tried to offer me as I went about my work, for now it was known that Jean Hendry was desperately ill. Her temperature was reported to be mounting rapidly, and she was delirious.

Shawhead had forbidden her removal to the hospital at Knox-hill, and now, in truth, was the dairy closed. Dr. Snoddie, with a sour and worried face, was in close attendance, and a specialist had been summoned from Glasgow.

In spite of all this, Jean Hendry grew worse. On the Sunday it was reported that she was sinking, and a kind of silence settled over Tannochbrae. Not a word passed between Cameron and my-

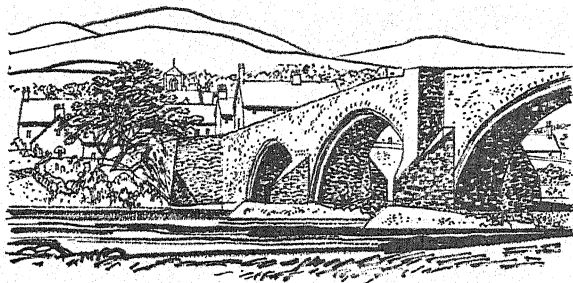
self. Then, toward the evening of that quiet day Janet, the house-keeper, entered the living room. Her face was drawn in noncommittal lines and her voice was somber as she said:

"It's all done with now. Jamie just brought in the word. She's gone."

I turned my head away. Outside, a bell began to toll.

Six weeks later, I met Shawhead for the first time since our encounter in the barn. The farmer, aged and broken by his loss, was returning from the churchyard. Awkwardly, I stopped in the middle of the pathway, and almost mechanically Shawhead stopped, too. Our eyes met, and each read in the face of the other the knowledge of what might have been, the terrible knowledge that his wife might now have been quick and alive beside him, not cold in her narrow grave.

A kind of groan broke from Shawhead's pale lips, and slowly he reached out his hand, which met mine in a long and tortured grasp.



## CHAPTER 6

WHEN I had been in Tannochbrae for the better part of a year, although I liked the place and the people and had moreover a genuine affection for the testy old party who employed me, my thoughts began to turn toward the future. Ambition still burned bright within me. I was now more than ever in love with Mary, and since so many obstacles were already in the way of our marriage, I felt I must at least try to offset them with some material advantages. Could this be achieved within the narrow confines of a small West Highland village?

At this stage of uncertainty and doubt, a series of events took place which, in a singularly irrational manner, were instrumental in determining my next move. It all began, ridiculously enough, with a fishbone.

The fishbone was in the throat of Mr. George McKellor and, because of it, one April evening about nine o'clock I was called to the McKellor villa, which stood in its own grounds on the outskirts of the village. I found McKellor in considerable pain, although making little fuss about it. He was a taciturn man, a confirmed bachelor, with the uncommunicative abruptness of one who has made his way in life entirely through his own efforts. By profession a grain merchant, he traveled every day to his office in Glasgow, where he was a highly successful operator on the commodity markets, known to be worth a tidy fortune.

The offending bone was easy to locate, and with one quick stroke of the forceps, I removed it from McKellor's throat. The relief was instantaneous. He drew a deep breath of ease, swallowed once or twice wryly, then smiled his slow, unwilling smile. "I must say I'm obliged to you for looking in so quickly," he said and paused significantly. "And now — I'm a man for prompt settlements, Doctor. How much do I owe you?"

I put the question aside with a deprecating smile.

"It was nothing. Just a neighborly action to run in and tweak it out for you. We'll charge you no fee at all."

George McKellor's stare was inscrutable. He had the look of a man with the money sense who has struck many a hard bargain in his day. After stroking his square chin reflectively, he finally exclaimed:

"Sit down. We'll have a drop of Scotch and a chat, you and me."

When he had poured the whisky, and we had lit our pipes, McKellor went on, noncommittally enough, yet with something compelling and confidential in his tone.

"I've heard of you, Doctor, one way and another, and it hasn't all been to your discredit." A dry smile. "I'm not given to sudden

likings, but one good turn deserves another." He paused and took a deliberate pull at his whisky. "Tell me, young fellow, have you ever heard of Roan Vlei?"

Half-amused, I shook my head.

"Never," I said. "It's a share, I suppose. Anyhow, it sounds like it."

"Aye," retorted McKellor, "it's a share, all right, a Kaffir gold mine, to be exact." He lowered his voice and spoke from between closed lips, as though the words were drawn from some secret fount of knowledge. "A few of us have information on the inside. We've formed a pool. It's in for a rise, a real big rise." Another long pause. "Doctor, I advise you to buy yourself a few Roan Vleis."

I laughed, pleased yet embarrassed.

"It's kind of you, I'm sure, Mr. McKellor, but — well, that's not my line of business."

McKellor fixed me with his friendly but enigmatic stare.

"You take my tip," he said, tapping the table in emphasis. "I promise you'll not regret it." And with a solemn gesture he pushed the whisky decanter toward me.

I slept little that night. At the outset I had not had the least intention of following McKellor's advice. But now the seed was sown, there developed in my mind the enticing idea that here was a chance to acquire the capital so necessary for my future plans — for house, practice and marriage alike — a miraculous opportunity which it would be folly to ignore. I had a snug little nest egg of about one hundred pounds, saved since I had begun my assistantship. What was to prevent me doubling, trebling it, perhaps turning it into a real bonanza? All sorts of golden fancies kept flashing before me, and in the morning when I rose I telephoned McKellor and told him of my decision.

"You're a wise man, Doctor," he said crisply. "Get in touch with Hamilton, my broker, in Ingram Street. He'll look after you. Mark my words, you'll not be sorry."

Hamilton proved exceptionally helpful. As the sum at my disposal was not large and the price of Roan Vleis rather high—they stood that morning at just under a pound per share—the broker proposed that I should operate on margin. Thus I should be able to purchase not 100, but 500 shares. Who could have refused such a suggestion, with its prospects of greater gain? Over the telephone, the momentous transaction was completed.

The next few days passed in a state of tension and excitement. There was nothing in the newspapers, not one word from George McKellor. The stock market was as flat as a pancake, and the wretched shares stood at a few pence below the figure at which I had bought them. I began to ask myself in a kind of anguish if I had not been overcredulous.

But, at last, one morning toward the end of the second week when, sick with hope deferred, I opened the *Winton Herald*, my heart gave a sudden bump. I saw that Roan Vleis had jumped a clear four shillings. I had made practically one hundred pounds. Incredible! The blood went pounding through my veins. I raced to the telephone and rang up McKellor.

"I've just seen the news," I stammered delightedly over the wire. "It's great, isn't it? Shall I . . . shall I sell?"

McKellor's voice was calmly incredulous. "Sell out at the very beginning? Are you gone wuddie? No, no, not on your life. You wait until I give you the word. Sell at that instant, and not before." And, with a click, the receiver went up at the other end.

Flushed and elated, with my head in a whirl, I went into the surgery and tried to settle to my work. It was difficult to concentrate, and during the next few days I hurried through my cases so that I might have more time to watch the progress of my speculation.

A great game, indeed! For now they had started, Roan Vleis rose on the market like a rocket. By the end of the week they stood at almost double their original figure. The news, which had been discreetly rumored, was now given out with full publicity

—a vein of rich ore had been struck in the mine. In consequence, everyone was rushing to buy.

I was constantly on the telephone to the stockbroker, in touch with McKellor morning and evening, kept in a perfect whirl of excitement. My original desire to sell and take a modest profit was long forgotten. Here was the chance of a lifetime to make a fortune. I went in deeper than ever, buying on margin until I held not far short of 1200 shares. My profit already stood at over 700 pounds, and life was wonderful indeed!

My work suffered more and more. When not engrossed by the stock-market reports or busy on the telephone, I kept figuring out my profits. Up and up they went. At the end of a week of the boom they stood not far short of 900 pounds. Nine hundred pounds! As much as I might make in two years, slogging winter and summer at the tedious round of medicine. Strung to the highest pitch of tense excitement by the money fever, I awaited McKellor's final instructions.

All this time, while my satisfaction increased, I had been conscious of a growing disapproval on the part of my employer. Once or twice he made to speak, but restrained himself. At last, however, when I came in late for supper one night following an interview with McKellor, the old man darted a glance at me and growled:

"What's come over you these days? You're like a cat on hot bricks. You can't be still. You don't eat, either. And you look as if you can't sleep."

"I'll be all right presently," I excused myself, as I sat in at the table.

"Presently!" exclaimed Cameron. "And why not immediately?"

"Well . . . as a matter of fact, I have something on my mind at the moment."

Cameron rose abruptly, rebuke stamped on every lineament.

"Aye," he said sternly, "I've got a good idea what it is, too, and God knows I don't like it. Let me tell you plainly you're not the



man you were. You're losing your sense of values. And more. You're doing rank bad work. I'm both disappointed and dissatisfied with it." And, coldly, he turned and walked out of the room.

Toward six o'clock on the following morning I was awakened by a call. Cameron's remarks still stung. Was I really being slack and slipshod in order to have more time to devote to this business of getting rich? Eager to justify myself, I welcomed this early summons, tumbled into my clothes, summoned the gig, picked up my bag of instruments, and set out on a long drive to Marklea.

Neglecting my work, I thought bitterly, between indignation and remorse; not the man I was — I'll show him!

In this frame of mind I reached the whitewashed cottage home of George and Elizabeth Dallas, which stood by the lochside in a remote moorland glen, below Marklea.

Elizabeth had been a maid at Dundrum Castle, a worthy, capable person, but already in her 40th year when Dallas, one of the shepherds on the estate, married her. The marriage had proved to be a happy one and now, rather confounding the prophets, Elizabeth was expecting a child. I had seen her several times recently at the surgery and knew that, more than anything, she wished to present her devoted husband with a son.

Attended by her aged mother, she was already in labor, although not far advanced, when I arrived. Outside, hanging about the back door, too anxious to return to his work, was Dallas. I could see him from the window of the tiny bedroom as I pulled off my coat and rolled up my sleeves.

The patient's pains, slight at first, became deeper and more prolonged. Morning merged insensibly into afternoon. It was now apparent that the case would not be an easy one. Elizabeth's age, and her anxiety that the baby should be well and healthy — all this worked against her. And her heart was not strong.

The afternoon drew in, then at last the moment came for action. Taking mask and ether, I put the poor woman, mercifully, to sleep. A full hour I struggled through the dark ways of difficulty

and danger, before the instrumental delivery was complete. And then, alas, it seemed that half my efforts had been in vain. The child came into the world pale and still. A sigh broke from the old woman.

"God save us, Doctor, the bairn's dead! To think it should be stillborn, Doctor. A boy, too. And her that's never like to have another."

Perspiration was streaming from my brow. I interrupted her harshly:

"Bring some hot water. And cold as well."

At the same time I began to apply artificial respiration to the lifeless child. When the two full basins were brought I lifted the frail, limp body and plunged it first in the warm water, then in the icy cold. Again and again I repeated the process, trying to galvanize the child by shock, using the methods of respiration in between—working desperately, feverishly, with a kind of passionate anger. I toiled and toiled until, when all seemed lost, a faint, feeble, convulsive gasp stirred the infant's chest.

A cry, as if in answer, broke from my dry lips. More desperately still I increased my efforts. Another feeble gasp and another, now less feeble, from the child . . . a little shiver, then shallow but regular respiration. Triumph swelled in me, and the old woman gave a cry of thankfulness and joy.

"It breathes, Doctor!" she gasped. "Oh, God in Heaven, it's come to life!"

Within an hour the little bedroom, restored from its disorder, freed from suffering and sadness, was again neat and clean, the bed made up, the fire burning brightly in the grate, and the mother, pale but joyful, with the baby nestling at her breast, following all my movements with swimming eyes which tried to express her gratitude.

It was almost dusk when I set out on the return drive to Tannoehbrae. In the intensity of my endeavor, time had passed unconsidered. What of it? I had vindicated myself, had answered

Cameron's taunt. I felt strangely rested and at peace. And yet, as the gig rattled down the main street, all at once, with a quickening of my heart, I thought of my Roan Vleis and how much they would have risen that day. I stopped the gig and bought an evening paper at the village store.

My eyes almost leapt from my head when I saw stretched across the top of the financial page a glaring headline: **BOTTOM DROPS OUT OF ROAN VLEI BOOM.**

With a sickening sensation in my breast, I rapidly read on. The report of the new vein in Roan Vlei had proved to be erroneous. The mine had struck a fault. In the course of the day Roan Vleis had slumped a full 30 shillings!

Overcome by bewilderment and dismay, I stood a moment facing this incredible disaster; then, with trembling hands, I stuck the paper in my pocket and set out in haste for George McKellor's.

"Come in, Doctor," the grain merchant cried, slapping me on the back with unusual gaiety. "We did it this time right enough, eh?"

I stared at him aghast. "Did it? How do you mean?"

McKellor's expression changed slowly until, quite nonplused by my chalky countenance, he exclaimed: "You've sold, haven't you — sold like I told you?"

A pause, then I muttered: "No, I haven't sold."

"What!" shouted McKellor in a tone of horror. "You haven't sold? In the name of heaven! Why, man? I rang you at nine this morning and left the message. To make doubly sure I even sent you a telegram. I told you to get out at the peak of the market, before the news of the fault was made public. I told you to sell everything and go a bear on the fall. If you'd done as I told you, you'd have doubled your profit."

There was another silence. He was waiting for me to speak.

"I had a case" — I averted my eyes — "up at Marklea. I never had your message. You see — I've been away all day."

McKellor exploded between exasperation and disgust.

"Away all day! Didn't I tell you to keep in touch with me?" he raged. "Wasn't that more important than your miserable case?"

I did not answer. McKellor bit his lips, controlling himself with difficulty.

"You're a fine man to take trouble over," he said, turning away angrily. "It'll be long enough before I give you another tip."

I walked home slowly with a set and somber face, all my plans, my grand ideas of riches shattered and in ruins at my feet. Dr. Cameron was seated by the dining-room fire when I went in, and for a moment neither of us spoke. The old doctor's eyes fell upon me as I flung myself into a chair and dejectedly poured myself a cup of tea.

"You've had a long day," said Cameron at last, not unkindly.

"Aye," I replied, and in a brief sentence I reported how the case had gone at Marklea.

"Well," said Cameron, and his tone held a hint of the old friendship, "you did right to stay there all day." He paused. "By the by, there's been an uncommon commotion while you've been away. They were trying to get you from Glasgow all morning. Something about buying and selling." He paused again, significantly. "But I had to tell them you were busy."

"Yes," I said slowly, "I was busy." And all at once a lightness came over me as I remembered the faces of Elizabeth Dallas and her husband, of the old woman, her mother, and, above all, the face of the little child as color stole into the pallid features, and life reanimated the tiny form!

When settling day arrived I found that the broker had sold me out the moment my margin was exhausted. Their statement showed that not only were my paper profits gone, but all my hundred pounds as well . . . not quite all, for by some technicality, an arithmetical juggling with eighths and sixteenths far beyond my comprehension, there actually remained of my original capital the sum of seven pounds fifteen shillings. A check for this amount was enclosed.

Gazing in silent bitterness at that infernal strip of paper, I was overcome by a strange impulse. I went that afternoon to the town of Knoxville where, in the High Street, stood the establishment of a country jeweler named Jenkins. We spoke together, Jenkins and I. The check, to my immense relief, passed out of my hands. And a week later a christening mug was delivered to that lonely cottage on the lochside, a fine silver mug which made the eyes of Elizabeth Dallas gleam with pride, a mug which she handled reverently and fondly displayed to the child she held so tenderly.

Upon the mug was inscribed her little son's name, *Georgie Dallas*, and, below, this odd inscription: *What money can't buy.*

## CHAPTER 7

WHILE my financial setback taught me a lesson I should never forget, it in no way diminished my professional self-confidence. I was "getting on fast," yet perhaps my progress was a trifle too speedy, perhaps I was acquiring too high an opinion of myself. There were moments when, in the face of my cheerful cocksureness, Dr. Cameron stroked his chin reflectively and stole a dry look at me. But if there was amusement in his eye, he masked it and said nothing.

One day I was working out a Fehling's test in the little room off the surgery. Known previously as "the back room," it had in a rush of scientific zeal been rechristened by me "the laboratory." This afternoon when Cameron indicated that he had a case to visit in Knoxville, I had airily remarked:

"Righto! I'll tackle the tests in the lab."

Now, with my pipe between my teeth, I watched the blue liquid in the test-tube bubble above the Bunsen and slowly turn brick-red — sugar, by Jove! Just as I'd suspected. Another smart piece of diagnosis.

I was interrupted by Janet who announced brusquely that I was wanted outside.

In the hall I found Will Duncan, the seedsman, fairly shivering with anxiety. It was the baby, he told me. Bad? Oh, yes, dreadfully bad! The little one didn't seem to get her breath, there was such a fearful whistling in her lungs, and it had come on so sudden, his wife was distracted, for Mrs. Niven, of all people, had said it was pneumonia.

I frowned. Part midwife, part nurse, part "layer-out" of the dead, waddling, interfering, wholly unqualified, the *sage femme* of the district, entrenched behind a portentous reputation — that was Bella Niven, and every doctor in the district hated her heartily.

"I'll be along at once," I said. "You get back and let them know I'm coming."

Young Duncan met me at the door of his little cottage, panting from his run home and desperately declaring:

"I've just had a word with Mrs. Niven, Doctor. The baby's no better, not a bit the better."

I went upstairs, and no sooner was I in the darkened room than I heard the baby's breathing; a shrill, half-whistling respiration which caught me up sharp.

Good Lord, I thought, there's something bad here sure enough! To the mother, who stood, distracted, by the newly lit coal fire, I said:

"Will you pull back the curtains, please, and let me have a little light?"

Bella Niven, arms folded on her formidable bosom, interposed:

"I ordered the curtains to be drawn. Don't you know the light frets the child?"

"I'm not a cat," I retorted sharply. "I can't see in the dark."

Nervously steering a middle course between her two advisers, young Mrs. Duncan went to the window. With an agitated hand she half drew back the curtains.

I bent over the bassinet. The baby's cheeks were flushed, she twisted and turned, whined pathetically. And through it all her breathing came and went — shrill, noisy, frightening.

I took the temperature—100°. Then with my stethoscope I examined her chest—a difficult job, for she simply would not keep still. She twisted and turned in the semidarkness like a lively minnow in a pool. Nevertheless, there was no doubt about that breathing, it whistled ominously, a dry note, not exactly pneumonic and not pleuritic, something outside my experience. I was worried—really worried. I felt myself confronted by a most obscure disease. Sick children were so difficult, the very devil, in fact. If only they could talk—describe their symptoms. Abruptly I straightened myself from the cot. I was baffled, completely baffled.

As I began to put away my stethoscope, Mrs. Niven, with a narrowed eye, scornfully remarked:

“There’s little need for all your thumping and listening. The child has congestion of the lung.”

In spite of myself I began to feel intimidated.

“It’s not congestion,” I said—chiefly for the sake of contradicting her.

“You mean it’s worse,” she asserted instantly.

“The Lord save us!” whimpered Mrs. Duncan.

I turned to the frightened young mother, but Niven was upon me again before I could utter one word of comfort.

“Since you say it’s not the congestion, what do you say it is?” she demanded aggressively.

I racked my brains.

“I have my own opinion,” I said at last. “It’s the lung!”

“The lung!” muttered Mrs. Niven, casting up her eyes. “The lung, quoth he! As if I hadn’t known it was the lung the minute I stepped in this door. And what are we to do then, since you’ve come to the conclusion it’s the lung? Am I to stand here and watch the dearie whistle herself into her beloved grave, or am I to poultice her with linseed back and front, like I wanted to do a solemn hour since if I’d had my way?”

“Don’t poultice her till I tell you to poultice her,” I said savagely.

"Then what . . . ?"

"Do nothing!" I cut her off and took Mrs. Duncan by the arm.

"I must have a second opinion. This is a difficult case. Keep calm. Don't worry. I'll be back in half an hour with Dr. Cameron."

"That's the wisest thing that's been said since he put foot in this room," Mrs. Niven remarked confidentially to the ceiling.

Cameron was at tea, munching a hot oatcake before a cheerful fire, when I rushed into the dining room.

"Come away, man, come away," he cried hospitably. "You're just in time to catch the bannocks while they're warm."

I forced a smile; it was a poor attempt.

"No, thanks. I'm not minding about tea. I've a case—a bad case. Mrs. Duncan's baby at Lomond View."

"Yes?" Cameron shot me a quick, quizzical glance. "A fine stirring bairn. I brought her into the world 18 months past. Ye know, this is a grand piece of cheese Janet's put before us. Come winter, I'm terrible fond of hot bannock and cheese to my tea. Try them, man, they go famously together."

I moved restlessly.

"I tell you I'm worried about this case."

"Tut, tut! That's not like ye at all, at all. You're not the man to let a case get the better of ye! Sit in and have a slice of cheese."

Under the delicate satire I colored.

"Hang your cheese," I blurted out. "Can't you see I'm wanting you to come to Duncans' now?"

Cameron's lips twitched. Slyly he cut himself a further tiny sliver and nibbled it off the knife blade.

"Well! Well!" he said. "What's like the matter with the bairn?"

"A whistling lung."

Cameron raised his eyebrows.

"Never heard of that before."

"Then you'll hear it now," I retorted angrily. "It's got me beat. It's a pneumothorax maybe—you can hear the air whistling into the pleural cavity."



"Pneumothorax," repeated Cameron, as though the sound pleased him. "It's a braw name!" He brushed the crumbs from his vest and got up. "Umph! We'd better see!"

The gig took us to Lomond View. It seemed as if I had spent the day tearing to and from the cottage. On the threshold of the sick room, Cameron remarked genially, "Well, well! What's all to do here?" His very presence soothed the air.

"I've poulticed the bairn, Doctor," whispered Mrs. Niven with a sharp look at me.

Cameron ignored her. He took a long look at the child, with his ear cocked to her breathing.

He spoke coaxingly. Then with a sure and gentle touch he lifted her out of the bassinet and, disdaining any stethoscope, laid his ear against her chest.

His head moved up, down, up again. He seemed almost to smile. He put the baby back to bed.

Then, for a moment he stood caressing his lantern jaw with his long, bony finger before he turned to Mrs. Duncan.

"My dear," he remarked blandly, "have ye such a thing as a hairpin in the house?"

"A hairpin?" she faltered, wondering if he had gone out of his mind or she, from panic, out of hers.

"Exactly," he reassured her. And when she fumblingly produced the hairpin he thanked her. "And now, lassie," he continued, patting her shoulder, "maybe ye'd leave us for a minute; we've something to discuss, my colleague and myself."

Half in fear, and half in wonder, little Mrs. Duncan let herself be propelled gently from the room.

"As for you, Mrs. Niven," said Cameron, in a different tone, "out ye go, too!"

"I'm as well here," she answered defiantly, "to lend ye a hand. Here I am and here I'll stay."

Cameron drew down his brows in a sudden scowl, black as a hanging judge.

"Out with ye!" he hissed. "And if ye don't, I'll take my boot to your big beam end."

It was too much even for the bold Niven. She quailed and in a moment she, too, was outside.

Cameron smiled at me. Then very confidently he inquired, "By the way, lad, do ye know what a squeaker is?"

"A squeaker?" I echoed, confusedly.

"That was what I said—a squeaker."

Nonplused, I stared at him.

"Well!"—Cameron reflected genially—"as ye don't know, I'll tell ye. A squeaker is a wee thing like a button that squeaks and whistles when ye blow it. A child's plaything, ye understand; ye'll find them in crackers and suchlike party trash. And since we're speaking of children, have ye ever noticed how mischievous they can be about the age of 18 months? They'll stuff things in their mouths and in their ears—aye, even up their noses."

As he spoke he was bending over the bassinet with the hairpin in his hand. Swiftly and delicately the round end of the hairpin slipped up the baby's left nostril, then out again. And at the instant the whistling ceased.

"Good Lord!" I gasped.

"There's your pneumothorax," Cameron remarked mildly, holding the squeaker in his palm.

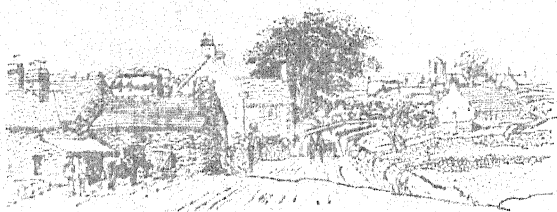
The baby smiled amiably at Cameron, curled itself into a ball, and began to suck its thumb.

I turned a dull red, mumbled shamefully a protestation of my own idiocy. And, stretching out my hand, I made to take the squeaker. But Cameron with a gesture slipped it in his own waistcoat pocket.

"No, no, lad," he declared kindly. "I'll take charge of this. And if ever I see ye getting a bit above yourself—then, sure as fate, out comes this squeaker!"



## CHAPTER 8



THE Scots—I still stoutly maintain—are an emotional people and Dr. Cameron was, fundamentally, a sentimental man. But with this difference, shared by most of the northern race—he was not demonstrative. Any display of feeling he regarded as a sign of weakness, and one gruff word from him meant more than a score of impassioned speeches. Thus, he had given me no warning of what was in his mind when, one Sunday morning, he looked across the britannia-metal coffeepot as we sat at breakfast and remarked dryly:

“I find that I no longer need you as an assistant.”

There was a dead silence. I had, true enough, considered the possibility of leaving Cameron, but only in my own interest. This dismissal was a different matter, and I turned pale with mortification and surprise. Then, before I had recovered from the shock, his stern expression merged into a twisted smile.

“But I could very well do with you as a partner. How about going halves with me in the practice, lad? I’ll make the terms as easy as you please.”

The blood rushed back into my cheeks with such violence that my head swam. He went on:

“Take a few weeks to think about it. Talk it over with your friends and . . .”—his eyes twinkled as he got up from the table and went to the door—“with that young lady who is brave enough to be interested in you.”

It was a tremendous tribute he had paid me, and to this day I treasure my achievement in winning the regard of this hard-

headed and high-principled old country doctor, a man who said little but observed everything, who would certainly never have chosen for his associate one whom he did not like and esteem.

My first impulse was to accept warmly, but Cameron insisted I first of all seek advice. I went, accordingly, to my old University friend, Professor Stockman, whose opinion I greatly valued. To my surprise, he strongly opposed my remaining in Tannochbrae. While in no way belittling rural practice, he declared that I should be foolish in the extreme to bury myself in a remote West Highland glen. These forcible words placed me in a dilemma. My heart told me that I should stay with Cameron, my head counseled me to leave him.

While I was in this state of indecision, winter took a last vile fling in a burst of abominable and atrocious weather. It snowed and rained, snowed again, then rained on top of that, until the roads were almost impassable with slush and mud. Wicked going and weary work it made for us. Pleurisy, pneumonia, and every form of chill and congestion ravaged the countryside. My costume day after day was heavy boots, leggings, and the thickest ulster in my wardrobe. Sleep became a luxury.

It was the worst time of all the year, when to work a busy, scattered practice was little better than slavery in its crudest form. And yet, perversely, the very torture of this treadmill inclined me to remain. How could I desert the old man at such a time?

Late one January night I stamped into the dining room after a particularly killing day, tugged off my boots and leggings, drew on my soft slippers and sank into a chair. "Please God," I thought, with a little shiver, "I'll not be out again tonight." As I sat there by the fire, I sipped a bowl of scalding broth which Janet brought me.

Half an hour later Cameron came in, his figure bowed a little, his whole aspect utterly fagged. He stretched out his hands to the fire, while the steam rose from his damp clothing. A silence of sympathetic understanding linked us. Then, with a long ex-

piration of his breath, he nodded to me, went to the sideboard, poured out some whisky, added a bit of sugar, marched back to the fireplace and picked up the little kettle which sang there upon the hob. With an eye which thanked Providence for the small mercies of life, he smacked his lips and mixed some toddy. But, alas, just as Cameron gratefully raised the steaming brew to his lips, the phone bell rang.

He lowered his toddy untouched, and we both waited apprehensively. When Janet came in, her eyes fell not upon me, whose duty it usually was to take the night calls, but upon Cameron himself, and in her face there was genuine reproach.

"It's from Mr. Currie, of Langloan," she announced, with a baleful shake of her head. "They've been expecting you all day long" — pause — "and now they want to know if you're coming at all."

Cameron groaned. Then, for all his case-hardened imperturbability, he let out a heartfelt oath.

"The de'il dang me for an idiot! What on earth was I thinking of to forget Neil Currie? And me passed his very door twice!"

I well knew the misery of missing a call in the rush of the day's work and having to retrace weary steps to make good the oversight.

"Let me go," I urged. "You're absolutely dead-beat."

"Dead-beat or no," said Cameron, "I'm going. Neil will never be satisfied unless I show face myself."

"I'll send round for Jamie and the gig," exclaimed Janet.

"No," growled Cameron. "Jamie's worn out, and the beast's half-foundered. It isn't more nor a mile to Langloan. I'll just step there myself. I'll be there and back in no time."

In spite of my attempts to dissuade him, he had his way. Neil Currie was one of his oldest friends, a fellow member of the Anglers' Club, at present laid low by a bad attack of jaundice. Turning up his coat collar, he braced himself to the bitter wind and left the house.

I was not easy in my mind and, indeed, when Cameron re-

turned an hour later, it seemed as though my anxiety were justified. The old man was blue to the ears and completely exhausted. Nevertheless, he wheezed triumphantly:

"I think I've smoothed out that affair. I explained to Neil how it happened. For heaven's sake, don't let me forget to see him in the morning."

As he stood by the fire he coughed sharply, then remarked: "I think I'll get upstairs."

But when halfway to the door he pressed his hand to his side and took a quick breath.

"Dod!" he exclaimed. "It catches me here right enough."

Ignoring his protests, I got Cameron upstairs to his bedroom, helped him out of his clothes and into bed. Once there, he seemed better and thrust aside my offer to examine him. But he did not mind when I dosed him with hot toddy and quinine. I waited in the bedroom until he fell into restless sleep. I hoped that he would be fit again by morning.

But next morning Cameron was far from well. When I went in at six o'clock I found him flushed, fevered, breathing rapidly, and tormented by a short, suppressed cough. This time I was not to be put off. I carefully sounded his chest. There was no doubt about it. Cameron had lobar pneumonia, and he himself was aware of the fact, for, gazing at me with distressed yet quiz-zical eyes, he gasped: "The right lung, isn't it?" And at my silence: "Well, it seems I'm in for it this time, sure enough."

Confronted by this emergency, I telephoned Linklater's, the wholesale chemists in Glasgow, who also conducted a local medical agency. Through them I obtained a locum tenens, a temporary assistant—a raw Inverness youth named Frazer, who arrived early that same afternoon.

Keyed to a high tension, I put the fear of God in Frazer, deputed to him the surgery patients and the outlying work. Then, rushing through my own cases with all possible speed, I devoted the remainder of my time to Cameron.

I realized only too well that there could be no immediate and spontaneous cure. In that era we knew nothing of the wonder drugs, of sulfanilamide, penicillin, and the other antibiotics which have reduced the mortality rate of lobar pneumonia by 85 percent. Then, for nine to ten days that dread disease "ran its course," each day showing a steady deterioration in the patient's condition, until the crisis came.

Thus the task to which I gave myself with passionate intensity was to pull Cameron through these fateful days. I felt I would succeed, too, for despite his pain and discomfort he was alert and cheerful.

"Don't look so annoyed wi' me, man," he declared, with an attempt at humor. "It's a grand opportunity ye're havin' to observe how sickness makes the most impatient man behave."

I smiled an acquiescence I was far from feeling as I punched up the old doctor's pillows, then measured out his medicine. I looked round: the fire was burning cheerfully in the grate, the draft screen in position, the windows open at the top, the room ordered and fresh and airy. A nurse from Knoxhill stood by the foot of the bed, trim and competent, ready to anticipate Cameron's every want. Everything was being done and everything would be done, I thought grimly. I must get Cameron through — I must, I must!

In this fashion for the first three days all went smoothly and the condition ran a normal course. But on the fourth day, with alarming unexpectedness, my patient took a turn for the worse. As I read the sick man's temperature and felt his running pulse, I steeled myself to betray no anxiety; but underneath, my heart throbbed with a sudden fear. I redoubled my attentions. All that night and the following night I sat up with Cameron, making every effort to stem the ominous advancing tide.

But on the sixth day Cameron was definitely worse; and that night he tossed through long, sleepless hours. Accordingly, on the seventh day, with a heavy heart, I telephoned Dr. Greer in



Glasgow, one of the best-known medical specialists in the west of Scotland and asked him to meet me in consultation.

In his unhurried, methodical way, Greer probed every aspect of the case. Afterward, he was kind in what he said to me, agreeing with my diagnosis and treatment, but alas, far from reassuring. When pressed for an opinion he shook his head. Cameron, he said, was over 60, and worn down by years of arduous exertions. Under the toxins of the pneumococci his strength had failed considerably and, more than that, he seemed now to offer little resistance to the malady. There was a definite breaking down of the blood cells and also involvement of the left lung—double pneumonia. He could do no more than urge me to continue the measures I was taking.

When Professor Greer had gone I was overcome by an insupportable feeling of wretchedness, recollecting all that I owed to Cameron. The memory of his kindness, affection and goodness rushed over me in a kind of agony.

The eighth day came without a shadow of improvement. Though I battled frantically to arrest the growing weakness of the sick man, it was useless. The old fighting quality, which had been so characteristic of Cameron, was finally extinguished. He lay passive on his pillow with half-shut eyes and could not rouse himself to take nourishment.

The ninth day was pregnant with fatality. All afternoon I sat by the sinking man, watching Cameron's strength ebb away under my very eyes. Never shall I forget that still cold winter twilight. Evening came, and with the falling dusk it seemed as if the mantle of death descended and hung above the enfeebled figure in the bed. Weakly Cameron turned his head and whispered, "No use, lad. It's all up with me this time."

Unable to reply, I clenched my hands until the nails bit into my palms. Violently I shook my head. But Cameron's eyes were already closed. . . . It was the end.

How long I sat there, in that silent room, I cannot tell. Janet

came and went. There was the glimmer of a candle. Then, from without, through the still and frigid air, came the slow tolling of the steeple bell.

Three days later the old doctor was buried in the village churchyard. Within the month his heirs—two nephews from a remote northern town—had sold the practice and the incoming man had taken over.

I was pressed by many people to remain, to set up in opposition to the new doctor, with Janet as my housekeeper, but, with Cameron gone, the appeal of Tannochbrae was finally extinguished.

I left silently, one winter morning, from the Junction station. The windswept platform was no more desolate than was my heart. Indeed, such desolation as now possessed me induced a mood of utter recklessness, linked to a crying need of tenderness. Gone now were all practical considerations. I sought out Mary who, having passed her last examination, was living with her parents in a pleasant country villa some twenty miles from Glasgow. Abruptly, I took both her hands in mine.

"Mary," I said, "I have no position, no prospects, and no money; In fact I'm 30 pounds in debt. I can't even offer you the barest pretense of a home. I'm quite sure your family consider me an irresponsible blackguard—and perhaps with reason. It all sounds hopeless, but we love each other, I know we can get along together, and I'm sure I can get some sort of job straightaway. So will you marry me, quickly, without fuss, one day next week . . . and take what looks like a very long chance?"

She did not speak, not a single word, but I read her answer in the swift tightening of her grasp, in the quivering brightness of her dear and steadfast eyes.

## CHAPTER 9

LATE that January afternoon, an ordinary young man in a new store suit and a pretty young woman wearing a dove-gray dress sat tightly holding hands and gazing with fixed intensity through the window of a dingy third-class compartment in the almost empty train laboring up the Rhondda Valley from Cardiff. All day long, after our wedding, my wife and I had been traveling from Scotland, and the final stage of our long journey to South Wales found us strung to a state of increasing tension at the prospects of beginning our life together in this strange, disfigured country.

Outside, a gray mist was swirling down between the black mountains which rose on either side, scarred by ore workings, blemished by great heaps of slag on which a few mangy sheep wandered in vain hope of pasture. No bush, no blade of grass was visible. The trees, seen in the fading light, were gaunt and stunted specters. Darkness had fallen when the engine panted into Tre-genny, the end township of the valley and the terminus of the line. We had arrived at last. Gripping our suitcase, I leaped from the train and helped my bride to alight.

We stood at the station exit, not knowing our way, depressed by the blurred and huddled aspect of the town, made up of ugly rows of miners' dwellings, interspersed with tiny chapels and taverns, set between high dumps of pit refuse, beneath a pall of fog and smoke. A loud hooter sounded and squads of miners began to come off shift from the pithead. Dark, sallow fellows they were, grimed with sweat and coal dust, each with a tiny oil lamp fixed to the peak of his cap. Approaching one of them, I asked to be directed to the doctor's house. He stared at me, then broke into a wild torrent of Welsh, not a word of which was intelligible to me. Another responded in similar fashion. But at last we found a lad who understood our inquiry and who

kindly led us to our lodging, which, to our consternation, we discovered to be no more than two sparsely furnished rooms in a collier's cottage. As we arrived we were greeted by a stream of dirty water sluiced from a tin bath through the side door.

The woman of the house, Mrs. Morgan, was perfectly civil but not effusive in her welcome. She showed my wife the bedroom upstairs and the few amenities provided by the kitchen, indicated that water came only from the outside well and that such toilet facilities as existed were confined to the back yard. Then she left us to ourselves.

"Well," I remarked, with false brightness, "it's not too bad."

"No, dear."

"And at least we'll be together."

"Yes, dear."

"But I must say," with a rush of indignation, "I can't see where their damned comfort comes in."

The advertisement in the *Lancet*, inserted by the Tregenny Coal Company, which had brought us at short notice to this outlandish spot, had promised the company's incoming medical officer not only remuneration at the rate of 500 pounds per annum, but also what was pleasingly described as "comfortable living quarters."

Facing each other across the worn stretch of linoleum, chilled by the rickety furniture upholstered in wax cloth, by the thin frayed curtains, the burst armchair, the sickly fern on its mottled bamboo stand, by this pinchbeck atmosphere of a fourth-rate boarding house, we exchanged wan and tremulous smiles. Then, observing a door which I felt might lead to an additional apartment, I tugged it open. With a frightful clatter there fell from a cupboard a score of empty whisky bottles left there by my predecessor, who, we learned afterward, had drunk himself into delirium tremens. This final shock proved too much for my poor wife. Her nerve gave way completely; she sat down on the suitcase and burst into tears.

In such an emergency there was only one remedy—food. There were no restaurants in Tregenny, but on our passage from the station I had perceived a fish-and-chips shop, a type of eating place which, in my impecunious student days, I had frequented with pleasure.

The shop was warm and steamy, filled with the rich odors of frying fat and fish fresh from the pan.

Our supper, served on the bare boards, was, as I had fully expected, hot, savory and satisfying—experience had taught me that where workingmen eat the food is usually good—and when we had consumed it, life seemed less complex, definitely rosier.

"I wonder should I go down to the company's office and report."

"You'll do no such thing," my wife said. "We've had a long, tiring journey. You're going straight to bed."

Sudden realization of the implications of these words, uttered purely in a spirit of maternal protectiveness, caused my wife to blush, but she added in a practical manner:

"At least, it's a good hair mattress. And I saw that the sheets were freshly laundered."

"Darling," I murmured romantically, ignoring the fat Welsh cook, who between fries was watching us from behind the counter, "you are without question the sweetest, bravest girl in all the world. You could have married someone who would have given you all the comfort and luxury you're accustomed to . . . a honeymoon at Monte Carlo, Florence, Capri. But no, against your parents' wishes, you marry me, a pauper, let me tear you from the bosom of your family, from your lovely home, for this . . . this dump. But just wait, darling. I'll make it up to you. I'll be a success for your sake. . . . I'll be rich, famous, the top specialist in Harley Street. And although we can't be in France or Italy tonight, I promise my love and adoration will make up for it. Ah, dearest, tonight. . . ."

"Hey, mon, be you the new doctor?"

My rhapsody, so lyrical, so inane, was cut short by the abrupt

appearance through the swinging door of a sturdy, broken-nosed little man with a face which seemed tattooed, so seamed and pitted was it with tiny bluish scars. He wore a leather skull cap on his round cropped head and carried a safety lantern in his hand.

"Sorry-like to fetch you, Doctor, bach," he went on, when I had answered, "but they do want you at t'pit."

It was annoying to be disturbed, yet I drew at least some slight comfort from this official recognition of our arrival. I escorted my wife across the street to our lodging, told her I would be back in half an hour, then set off with my new friend, whose name was Rhys Jones. On the way he told me, in the tone of one long accustomed to hardship and disaster, that a man had been injured underground, that we must go down to aid him.

At the first-aid room in the colliery yard, Jones handed me a battered surgical bag, then conducted me to the shaft head where, beneath the winding gear, the iron cage stood waiting for us. We entered. As the gates clanged, he gave a signal and, before I could draw a breath, the cage dropped like a plummet, with sickening velocity, 900 feet into the depths of the earth.

At the bottom we drew up with a jerk. We emerged into a sort of vaulted cave, roughhewn and dripping with water, from which there gave off a series of tunnels. Along one of these tunnels my companion led the way, every few minutes drawing me aside into little safety niches while, with a rumble and a roar, a train of metal tubs conducted by men stripped naked to the waist thundered past, missing us, it seemed, by inches.

"Aren't we nearly there?" I asked, as we reached a steeper incline.

"Nay, mon," he answered. "T'face is two miles from the shaft. Takes us 40 minutes to reach it."

Nine hundred feet beneath the surface of the earth, in a tiny burrow two miles from the sole exit to free air—a horrible claustrophobia attacked me, a constriction of my throat and chest. I had to fight to keep my head. Though I flattered myself on my



physical fitness, now I was gasping for breath in the humid, dust-charged air. Ignoring my halfhearted protests, Jones relieved me of the heavy bag as, turning off the main level, we entered a branch tunnel, not more than three feet high, indeed of such restricted dimensions that we had to crawl forward on our hands and knees. The bed of this jagged conduit was awash with running water.

My God, I thought to myself, this is where men work, toil for long eight-hour shifts, hacking and hewing the coal from the narrow and difficult seams, day after day, through boyhood, manhood, the prime of life, yes, even to old age—a lifetime spent in this troglodyte existence, and all this for a wage which barely keeps body and soul together.

Presently, we arrived at the coal face and here, succored by the undermanager and three of his mates, lay my patient, flat on his back, pinned by a heap of debris. In a low voice the undermanager told me that they had been shot-firing to bring out the coal and due to a fault in the stratum the blast had undercut, bringing down masses of broken stone and leaving a great insecure ledge overhanging the cavity beneath. Not only was the injured man caught in the fall, but at any moment the entire roof, a hundred tons of solid rock, might cave in.

Although the manager's voice was steady, it held an unmistakable urgency. With a hurried glance at that tombstone overhead, I crept up to the trapped miner. His left leg was hopelessly mutilated, and so irretrievably wedged that he could not be moved an inch. Only one course was open: an immediate amputation below the knee.

The thought appalled me. The baleful prediction of my student days had come to pass, and I knew by this time only too well my lack of skill as a surgeon, or at least my limitations in that bold and delicate art, which demands a special coördination of mind, heart and hand it has never been my good fortune to possess. But now, fearful though I might be, there was no drawing



back. I slit away the tattered clothing with a pair of curved scissors and bared the mangled limb. I saturated the anesthesia mask with ether. My patient was still conscious.

"I'll get you out of this," I whispered, with a confidence I did not feel. "Just breathe in and forget about everything."

When he was under the influence of the anesthetic, I propped the ether bottle against his side, tightened the tourniquet, pulled on a pair of rubber gloves, picked up the knife and in a strained silence, having swabbed the knee with iodine, made the first incision.

There was no time for finicking—it was neck or nothing. Lying flat on my stomach under that low and pendant roof of rock, I worked like one possessed, shaping wide flaps, methodically clipping on the artery forceps one after another, cutting down to the bone. Then I reached for the saw. But as I did so there was a cracking sound, a fragment of stone detached itself from the roof and fell upon the container of ether, smashing the glass to fragments, flooding every drop of anesthetic upon the ground.

I swore despairingly. But it was impossible to stop. At frantic speed I went through the bone and began the ligatures. The undermanager, with his eye on the cracking roof, kept urging me to greater haste. I slipped in two drainage tubes, made good the last internal sutures and started, with deep stitches, to sew up the skin flaps. As I threaded my needle for the last time I suddenly looked round and caught the injured man's dilated eye fixed strainingly upon me.

"Ye've made a fine job of it, Doctor, bach," he whispered from between his clenched teeth, "though I only saw you do the hint end of it."

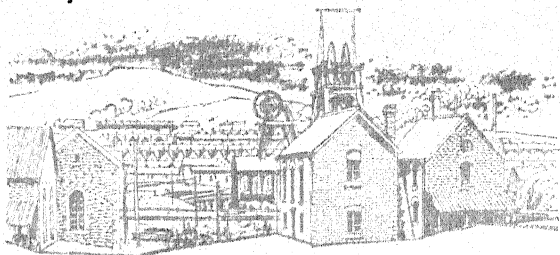
He had been out of the anesthetic and watching me for a full five minutes.

As they pulled him clear of the undercut and laid him on the stretcher his eyes were still fastened upon me. He tried to speak

again. Instead, he fainted. And, indeed, I almost gave way also, for no sooner had we started back on our slow and painful passage to the shaft, than 50 paces back of us, with a final rending crepitation, the entire rock ceiling fell in.

We reached the surface at two in the morning, and to me the stars had never seemed brighter. There was no ambulance. We carried our patient on the stretcher to his home and there, aided by the district nurse, I worked over him until he had begun to recover from the worst symptoms of shock. Dawn was breaking when I finally reached our lodging. Heavens, I thought dizzily, as I let myself in, what a way for any man to spend the first night of his honeymoon!

## CHAPTER 10



FIRST impressions of a place often prove misleading—but in this instance they showed a melancholy accuracy. No mining town can ever be a thing of beauty, and Tregenny was certainly, in the local idiom, a “rough shop.” Tregenny’s existence was centered in the mine. The little Tregenny Coal Company was not a rich concern, operating at a disadvantage in wet, narrow seams where the coal was of indifferent quality. Moreover, the mining industry in general had, at this period, lapsed into a slump, so it was inevitable that local conditions should be bad.

There was no hospital, no ambulance, no X-ray apparatus. The sanitation would hardly bear looking into. In such an environment medical practice could hardly conform to the more romantic traditions of the profession.

The company did its best by providing a doctor for the miners

and their families but, inevitably, the standard of men attracted to such an appointment was lamentably low. Thus in recent years Tregenny had seen an irregular coming and going of raw youngsters fresh from college, licensed apothecaries with quasi-medical degrees and, worst of all, a draggled succession of "dead beats," doctors who had failed elsewhere or fallen into disrepute.

Small wonder, then, that our arrival caused no commotion and our welcome was both chill and apathetic. Yet beneath their dark and upright dignity, the people were, at heart, warm and kindly. Once their distrust of strangers is overcome, the Welsh can be intensely hospitable. My conduct of that first case had created a favorable impression and, while still gazing at me askance, people began to wonder, hopefully, if they had "got a half-decent chap" at last.

Morning and evening I saw patients in the crowded surgery near the pit, until the walls sweated and the air was choked with the steam of damp bodies. Miners with beat knee, nystagmus, chronic arthritis, sprained and lacerated limbs. Their wives, too, and their children with coughs, colds, and colics—all the minor ailments of humanity. Those patients who were more seriously ill I visited in their homes.

Despite handicaps and shortages, or perhaps because of them, it was worth-while work. My amputation case was making an admirable recovery. Alone in the village, with no other physician for miles around, I felt a queer pride in my responsibilities, a rising exultation in the hope and promise of the future.

In other ways, however, Tregenny was unquestionably grim. There was no social life, no means of entertainment, not even a cinema. My wife and I both loved the country and were used to long rambles together through woods, fields and meadows. Here, however, shut up in this narrow valley, hemmed in by the smeary blackness of the wasteland, it was impossible to escape to verdant pastures. In fact, that very color, green—nature's own sweet tint—was something we never saw in all the monochrome

of drab Tregenny. At times this sense of being buried, far down in this swart cleft of the mountains, was singularly oppressive. But we were young, healthy and absurdly in love. We also had a sense of humor which enabled us to laugh at the deficiencies and oddities of our existence. . . . In brief, we were happy.

Our most intimate friend in this carbonaceous wilderness was the district nurse, Olwen Davies, a middle-aged woman who became especially dear to both of us. And since her history is one which merits consideration, I might perhaps anticipate events and recount it now in its entirety.

Olwen Davies was only 25 when, fresh from her hospital training course, she was appointed visiting nurse to the district of Tregenny. Her reception was as chilly as ours had been. Nevertheless, she threw herself enthusiastically into her work, walking in all weathers over the bleak mountain trails, visiting the sick, tending the few patients who appeared at the bare, simple dispensary provided by the rural board.

Toward the end of her first summer a sharp epidemic of enteric fever struck Tregenny. Despite opposition from the slack and incompetent company doctor, Olwen traced the source of infection to a polluted well and succeeded in having it sealed.

There was something of an outcry at such "interference" on the part of the young nurse. But no new cases of typhoid appeared, in record time the epidemic was confined and Olwen, going about her work, felt the tide of public esteem flow slowly toward her. No longer was she greeted with dark looks and hostile silences. The people opened their doors to her, and their hearts.

Then, at the end of that year, a great event took place: a local committee made her a present of a three-speed, all-weather bicycle. It cost the good people of the township no slight effort, for times were bad in the valley, but its worth to Olwen, freed now from the drudgery of tramping her daily ten-mile round, was inestimable.

It was on this same machine, now far from new but still sturdy

and serviceable, as she came to meet me on a case, that I first saw Nurse Davies. She was a tall, solidly built woman of 47 then, her figure buxom, her face mature. But there was a steady frankness, an ardor in her clear gray eyes that bespoke a sincere and earnest soul. Many times I found reassurance in her presence. Perhaps it was the way she had of standing at the bedside, of handing an instrument or a dressing, of murmuring encouragement when I was obviously in doubt.

Often in the midnight hours as we worked together in the cramped attic of a broken-down dwelling, fighting to save a human life, I marveled at her fortitude and patience. At the pit head, when summoned for an accident, thanks to her indispensable bike she was usually there before me — calm, cheerful and courageous. Most laudable of all was the work which she had done in opening, on her own initiative, a clinic for the children and aged people of the township, and which she held every day in a room rented, and paid for, by herself.

She was no conventional saint. She enjoyed a cigarette with her coffee and, in later years, a glass of oatmeal stout. In a town of many chapels, she rarely went to church. Too busy, was her smiling excuse. Yet I never once heard her speak ill of anyone. She possessed a priceless fund of common sense and an instinct of resourcefulness which never deserted her. Upon one unforgettable occasion the current failed in an isolated cottage while I was performing an emergency appendectomy. In the sudden blackness I stood helpless. But she slipped outside and returned at once with a brilliant light by which the operation was successfully completed. It was her electric bicycle lamp.

That old black bicycle, it really seemed a part of her! When our vigil in the night had ended and she had brewed me a restoring cup of hot, strong coffee, she would nod a brisk good-bye and pedal back to her lodging beside her clinic. To tease her, I pretended to believe that she was, and would be all her life, geared to those inexorable wheels.

Often I wondered why she had never sought out a better position. The nurses with whom she had trained had all "got on" — indeed, one of them had recently been appointed matron of a great new hospital in Liverpool. When I read of this in the *Medical Journal*, I could not help remarking:

"You should have had that post. It would have suited you."

"No." Nurse Davies raised her eyes steadily to mine and smiled her quiet, generous smile. "I'm not much good at managing people and a bit rusty on surgical technique. I'm much happier, and a lot more use, careering around this old place."

One morning before breakfast as I was dressing, my landlady, Mrs. Morgan, came rushing to the bedroom in a state of agitation.

"It's Nurse Davies, Doctor. . . . She was biking to a case last night . . . out Blanethly way. A pylon had blown across the road. She ran smack into it in the dark. Lay all night in the wind and pouring rain before the men coming on day shift found her. They think her back is broken."

At her lodging, where they had taken her, I made a prolonged examination. Two of the lower spinal vertebrae were fractured, there was neither sensation nor power of movement in the lower limbs — a total paralysis. We carried her to the station where she was placed on a double mattress in the guard's van of the forenoon train for Cardiff. I went with her, and three hours later she was in the city infirmary.

Back in Tregenny we waited for news. At first it was doubtful that she would survive. Then came word of a series of operations, long and complex. Afterward, weeks in plaster of Paris, massage, electrical therapy. Finally, the devastating verdict — it had all been in vain, she would never walk again.

The weeks went past. We had a new nurse now, a young probationer, who worked well enough on the district. But there her activities ceased — the clinic, which had been Nurse Davies' special charge, was not reopened. And here more than anywhere was the old nurse missed.

One afternoon, as I passed the disused room in Chapel Street I drew up short. I had thought I heard her voice. Instinctively I threw open the door. Then I saw something which made my heart turn in my breast.

There, in a wheel chair, her hair turned completely gray, bent a little, much thinner, her paralyzed legs covered by a rug, but still in her uniform, was the old district nurse. Surrounded by her patients, children mostly, she steered herself skillfully about the room. Motionless, I stood in the shadow. When the last patient left the room she had barely time to spin round before I went forward and clasped her hands.

"Nurse Davies . . . Olwen! You're all right."

She gave me her rare smile.

"Why not? Can't you see . . . I'm back at work" — her smile deepened — "and still on wheels!"

## CHAPTER 11

A WET and dark December night the wind howled down the narrow valley among the scattered rows of houses, driving the rain against the windowpanes and scouring the deserted streets in hissing gusts. When I had finished my last round, I came in, soaked to the skin, tired, utterly dispirited. It was one of those days when I cursed the fate that had brought me to Tregenny. I was, I told myself bitterly, no selfless altruist, no fond and fervent martyr in the cause of suffering humanity. And after three months in this dismal place, lost amidst the black Carmarthen mountains, I was beginning to feel that I had the worst end of the bargain. The place itself, less from drab ugliness than from its queer and unearthly detachment, was utterly foreign to me. There seemed, indeed, in the very air of this remote village a queer sense of unreality and superstition which grew upon one like a ghostly fantasy. Many of the people were friendly now, yet beneath the surface strange currents ran, and depths existed that

I could not plumb; I felt, almost with a thrill of fear, the presence of the supernatural.

I flung myself into bed that night, bone-weary, praying that I would not be disturbed, and fell into a heavy sleep.

The faint whirring of a bell half-awakened me. On and on it went, so damnably insistent it would not let me be. Still dazed with sleep, I fumbled in the darkness and took up the telephone receiver beside my bed. A woman's voice spoke instantly, but from a far way off.

"Come at once, Doctor. Come to Evan Evans' house by Ystfad."

I groaned.

"I can't possibly get up to Ystfad tonight."

"But you must come tonight, Doctor, bach. . . ."

"Who are you?"

"I am Evan Evans' wife. And my daughter is very ill."

"I'll come in the morning, I tell you."

"Oh, no, indeed, you must come now. Please, Doctor, you must come now."

The pleading, the pitiful urgency of the voice persuaded me. I dropped the receiver, lay for a moment collecting my scattered wits, then I rose, tumbled into my damp clothes and picked up my bag.

Outside the rain had ceased, but the wind was high and bitter cold, driving dark clouds across an icy moon. The mountains rose in wild and haggard majesty upon a scene so starkly desolate that instinctively I shivered and drew my scarf about me. As I stumbled along the broken mountain road that led to Ystfad, five miles up the highest peak in that rugged chain, I began to recollect a vague story of this man, Evan Evans, whose wife had called me out.

Evans had lived at one time in Tregenny itself, a respected and prosperous man, owner of the snug little "outcrop" pit known as Tregenny No. 1. But one day a dispute had arisen between himself and the main Tregenny Coal Company. The question was negligible, even trivial, but Evans was a violent man. The dispute



became a quarrel and then a lawsuit. Evans lost his suit. Immediately he took it to appeal. He lost his appeal. Burning with resentment, he took it to a higher court. Again he lost. And so the process was continued until finally, his money dissipated, his colliery sold above his head, he had retired, a warped and ruined man, to a forsaken house on the mountainside. There he had remained for years, hating and avoiding his fellow men, perhaps a little crazy from his misfortunes, until he had become an almost legendary figure. He guarded his seclusion jealously, but often in the autumn afternoons he might be seen, a dim, gaunt figure, shooting the wild snipe on the ridges, and sometimes at night he would gallop his pony along the moonlit summit, wildly, as though he rode against the world.

After a journey which seemed unending, I reached the lonely house at last. Large and rambling, adjoined by a huddle of outbuildings, it was a gloomy and dilapidated barracks. Not a glimmer of light was visible as I trudged up the narrow path, and no sound broke the universal stillness but the remote hooting of an owl. I pulled the bell. There was no answer; only a furious barking of dogs. After a long delay the door was opened by an oldish woman in a dingy black dress and shawl. While she peered at me with a frightened, hooded face two hounds skulked about her heels, showing their teeth and growling. Annoyed by this reception, I pushed past her through the hall and into a large stone-flagged room that seemed half kitchen and half parlor. Here my eyes fell at once upon a young girl who lay, unconscious, wrapped in blankets, upon a horsehair sofa beside the fire. Beside her, bowed in an attitude of heavy watchfulness, sat a gaunt and powerful man. His physique was, in fact, tremendous—six foot six he must have stood when his great, wasted frame was raised erect. He was in his shirt sleeves, wore rough knickerbockers and no shoes, and his air of general disorder was heightened by a mane of graying hair which fell in tangles about his head. He might have been 55. He was Evan Evans without a doubt.

He did not hear me enter, but as I heaved my bag upon the table, he swung round with alarming suddenness, his eyes glittering in his dark face with such wildness that I was fairly taken aback.

"What do you want?"

He spoke thickly, with a husky intonation, and I thought at first he was drunk. I answered with as much moderation as I could muster:

"I'm the doctor. If you step aside I'll have a look at the patient. She looks pretty bad."

"Doctor!" He repeated the word. Though he did not raise his voice, an indescribable menace filled it. "I won't have any doctors here. I won't have anybody here. Get out. D'you hear me? Get out!"

His manner was formidable in the extreme, yet a sense of real indignation sustained me.

"You're crazy to talk like that. Your daughter is seriously ill. Don't you want me to try to help her?"

He winced when I said that and darted toward the sofa a furtive glance in which there was a sudden and almost piteous fear.

"I don't trust doctors," he muttered sullenly. "Not for my daughter. I don't trust anyone."

Silence in that strange and barren room. What was there to be done? I glanced toward the woman, who stood in mortal terror by the doorway, her hands clasped weakly upon her breast. I presumed that she had shot her bolt in summoning me against her lord and master's will. No further help could be expected there. Only one course seemed likely to succeed. With a set face I moved to the table and picked up my bag in the pretense of leaving.

"Very well. If your daughter dies you know who is responsible."

For a moment he remained motionless, clenching and unclenching his fingers, his cheek twitching indecisively. When my hand was almost on the door, with a sobbing breath that seemed torn from his great chest, he cried:

"Don't go. If she's bad like you say, you better look at her."

I came back slowly and knelt down beside the patient. She was older than I had imagined, about 18, and despite the coma which held her, there was in her slender immaturity a strange, uncared-for beauty. Her skin was burning to the touch. I was puzzled as to the cause of her infection until I saw the faint but dusky swelling behind her left ear — acute suppurative mastoiditis. When I had made quite sure I turned to Evans.

"You ought to have sent for me days ago."

"It is only a blast," he muttered, using the local idiom for inflammation. "We have used goose grease and bran poultice. I am after fetching leeches tomorrow from the lake by Penpeoch. She will be better then."

"She will be dead then."

His jaw dropped and his gaunt cheeks turned bone-white. He reached out to the wall as if for support. His eyes never left my face. At last he moistened his lips.

"Is that the truth?"

"Look here, Evans" — I spoke vehemently in my effort to convince him — "you must understand me. The whole of this mastoid bone is filled with pus. Unless it is opened up and drained it will break through the skull into the brain. You know what that means. If we don't do something at once, your daughter has about six hours to live."

I saw his jaw clench. "Do it then. She must get better."

He said no more, yet I knew that he was trusting me against his will only because necessity and fear compelled him. And, at a sudden thought, a thrill of apprehension shot through me. I had persuaded him to let me operate. What would happen if I failed?

But there was no time to dwell on this reflection. I opened my bag, laid out my instruments, anesthetic and dressings, prepared two basins of carbolic solution, then between us we lifted the patient, a slight burden, onto the bare wooden table. The pungent odor of the anesthetic rose into the smoky air.

The light, a glaring oil lamp held by Evans, was atrocious, the conditions unimaginably bad. As my first incision slit up the puffy skin behind the ear I realized that I had to make only one slip, one single error of judgment, and I would penetrate, fatally, the lateral sinus of the brain. I worked by a kind of instinct, and through it all painfully conscious that the wild eyes of Evan Evans were bent upon me. I was down to the bone now, the delicate bone of the skull. Was there no pus after all? Slowly, I went deeper, and deeper still. And then, when I felt I must surely pierce the dura into the very cerebrum itself, a heavy bead of pus welled up through the spongy cells.

Hurriedly, I cleared out the pent-up matter, then washed the cavity with antiseptic, packed it with iodoform gauze. Quickly, quickly, I finished the work. Five more minutes and the patient was back upon her improvised bed, breathing quietly and deeply, as if asleep. Her pulse was stronger and a better color tinged her skin. I was convinced that, free of the morbid center of infection, with her healthy young constitution, she would recover.

As I packed my bag, filled with that sense of achievement which comes on rare occasions to the long-suffering general practitioner, I threw a look at Evans. I noted that the sullenness was gone from his dark face. I could see that he was rent by a new emotion—gratitude. I said briefly and with grim triumph:

“She’ll do now.”

He did not answer for a minute; then he muttered:

“Yes, indeed; she does look better.”

Somehow at the sight of him there, with his great dangling hands and his troubled brow, my anger died. He was so deeply affected by the prospect of his daughter’s recovery. And in a milder manner, nodding toward the woman of the house, who had at that moment taken a chair by the bed, I said:

“One thing you mustn’t forget. You owe it to your wife for asking me to come.”

His somber eyes followed mine in complete bewilderment.

"I do not understand. That is Gwynneth, our servant." He added, "She can't speak English — only Welsh."

I stared at him.

"But, man alive," I expostulated, "don't you know that's how I got the call? She telephoned me to come here."

He gazed at me wonderingly.

"There is no telephone here. Nor for miles by here."

One glance convinced me that he spoke the truth. My head reeled. I faced him dizzily.

"Good Lord, don't you realize that your wife begged me to make this call? She spoke to me this very night. Do you hear me? I asked her who she was. She told me plainly that she was your wife."

He flushed darkly and, towering above me, raised his clenched fist. Then with a great effort he mastered himself.

"You don't know about my wife." He broke off, his wild eyes searching my startled face, then said with a sobbing cry: "Haven't they told you it happened . . . because I wouldn't have a doctor . . . ? She died in this room five years ago."

I WISH I might end this incident on an eerie note of mystery. I should then receive many letters of appreciation from my spiritualist and crystal-gazing friends. Alas, my veracity compels me to record the truth, which I learned shortly afterward.

Evans' daughter had a solitary friend, a woman who knew the family's tragic history, knew also that the girl was desperately ill and, who, taking her courage in her hands but disguising her identity lest Evans should find her out, had at the last moment put a call through in the name of Evans' wife.

She was the switchboard operator on the Tregenny telephone exchange.

## CHAPTER 12



TIME was fleeting—days, weeks, and months—and I was getting nowhere. In the first flush of my enthusiasm I had promised my darling wife—although I did not use this term of endearment when her efforts at Welsh cooking made me dose myself with bicarbonate of soda—I had promised her riches, a house in Harley Street, and, if I recollect correctly, a villa on the Mediterranean. And here we still were, plodding along, trying to save a little money, never “getting out of the bit,” as the Scots say, still buried alive in these wretched mountains. I chafed, used many strong words, and applied for many situations, all without avail. Then, one memorable day, I burst in with a letter.

“We’re leaving. At the end of the month.” I handed her the letter. It was from the secretary of the Medical Aid Society in the neighboring valley of Tredegar, offering me a post as doctor to the society. The salary was only slightly more than I was now being paid, but what caught the eye and made the pulse bound was the fact that a house—a real house—was included in the terms of the appointment.

We remained long enough to enable the company to secure another doctor; then, packing our few belongings into a borrowed truck, we took leave of Olwen Davies and of our landlady, Mrs. Morgan, climbed in beside the driver, and set out over the high ridges for our new home.

Tredegar was a colliery town, too, but it was trim and clean and set on the verge of still unspoiled hill country. There were several decent stores, a public library, and—one could scarcely be-

lieve it—a town hall where moving pictures were shown twice a week.

The little house into which we moved was stoutly built of red brick with a gabled roof. Standing in a wild patch of garden beside a clear mountain stream spanned by a wooden bridge, it was appropriately named "The Glen."

This was a time of great happiness. Our small domain was most simply furnished, but we had both pride and comfort in it. On the cold nights we sat before our blazing fire—coal was plentiful and free—reading, talking, arguing. We had tremendous arguments. Unbelievably, my wife's cooking improved. She even revealed herself as a skillful gardener, raising tulips and noble hyacinths in the tiny glassed porch of the house.

For me there was plenty of interesting work. Under the local medical-aid plan, all the miners paid a small weekly contribution to the society and were entitled thereby to free medical treatment for their families and themselves. This scheme can be regarded as the foundation of the plan of socialized medicine which was eventually adopted by Great Britain. Aneurin Bevan, later Minister of Health, who was mainly responsible for the national project, was at one time a miner in Tredegar, and here the value of prompt and gratuitous treatment for the worker was strongly impressed upon him.

There is certainly virtue in the program, but it also has its defects, of which the chief one, in Tredegar, was this—with complete *carte blanche* in the way of medical attention the people were not sparing, by day or night, in "fetching the doctor." In a word, the plan fostered hypochondriacs and malingerers.

My real invalids were numerous, but I had also to deal with the other sort. There was one hale young woman who lay in bed all day long and insisted on being visited, in the belief that she was consumptive—an *idée fixe* which no amount of argument could dispel. Many of the old-time miners affected the symptoms of nystagmus and beat knee, occupational diseases which entitled

them to a pension and, as they were adept at what was known as "swinging the lead," they sometimes succeeded in confusing me.

At first I was conciliatory toward such cases, but soon my patience wore thin and I developed a brusqueness which would have pleased that master of invective whose "Dammit to hell" had so often resounded in the cottages of Tannochbrae. On one occasion, at two in the morning, I was routed out, dog-tired, to see an old woman who, when I entered her room, exclaimed from her comfortable bed: "Oh, Doctor, Doctor bach, I cannot stop yawning." At which I glared at her and, as I made for the door, replied over my shoulder in broad Scots: "Then shut your blasted mouth!"

In my medical knowledge I was progressing steadily, making friends among my patients and, at the cost of a few humiliations, learning that I did not quite know everything. The chief doctor of the district, Dr. Davies, was not only a highly skilled physician, with several exclusive London diplomas, but a brilliantly successful surgeon as well. When he consulted with me over a difficult or serious case, often he differed, in the kindest manner, yet authoritatively, with my diagnosis.

After such interviews I would sit all evening, grinding my teeth, muttering invectives against my worthy superior. Then suddenly I would jump up. "Damn it all, he's right and I'm wrong. It *was* t.b. meningitis, and I should have spotted it days ago. I know nothing, absolutely nothing, but I will — I tell you I will!"

To my audience of one, knitting sedately on the other side of the fireplace, this might well have seemed a natural pique, soon to be passed over and forgotten. But no, I was in dead earnest. Davies had shown me my limitations; I knew I should never progress until I had overcome them.

Presently, to my wife's surprise, there began to arrive at "The Glen" a succession of large crates which at first sight looked as though they might contain interesting articles like new sheets or table linen or a set of dinner china (which she badly needed), but which revealed nothing more exciting than dozens of large,



thick and horribly abstruse-looking medical textbooks. Not having enough spare cash to purchase the books, I had joined the library of the Royal Society in London—in fact, it looked as though the entire library now were here, and it was only the beginning.

Now, every night when I came in from my eight o'clock surgery, I sat down before these books. Often, after a punishing day's work, I was so weary I could scarcely keep my eyes open. But with relentless determination I forced myself to study, often reading until one o'clock in the morning.

After several months it became necessary for me to put in some practical work in biochemistry. The nearest laboratory was in the Health Department of Cardiff, more than 50 miles away. I applied to the secretary of the Medical Aid Society for four hours off duty on Thursday afternoons and when this request was granted I departed every week on my recently acquired secondhand motor-cycle for the distant city. By making the journey at breakneck speed, I could secure two full hours in the laboratory before returning to my evening surgery.

Of course, neither my wife nor I realized in the slightest the craziness of my project, which was to take no less than three major postgraduate degrees. For a city practitioner commanding the expert teaching and highly technical resources of the great hospitals and universities, this constitutes a formidable enterprise, in which the average failures are more than 75 percent. For an overworked colliery assistant, equipped only with borrowed books, prepared by no more than a few hasty dashes to a provincial laboratory, the thing was surely an impossibility.

I shall never forget the wet and windy day on which I departed for London to sit the examinations, nor the pessimistic bulletins which I felt obliged to send home during the ensuing week. It is a strange contradiction in my character that, despite the confidence which sustains me during months of effort, the actual test of that effort finds me dispirited and hopeless. My brain was inactive,

almost dull. I felt that I knew nothing. Indeed, when I began the written part of the examination, which was held at the College of Physicians, in Trafalgar Square, I found myself answering the papers with a blind automatism. I wrote and wrote, never looking at the clock, filling sheet after sheet, until my head reeled.

After the written papers the practical and viva-voce parts of the examination began, and I was more afraid of these than anything which had gone before. There were perhaps 30 other candidates, all of them men older than myself, and all with an unmistakable air of assurance and position. When I compared the charming manners, immaculate attire and obvious standing of the candidate placed next to me with my own provincial awkwardness I felt my chances of favorably impressing the examiners to be small indeed.

My practical, at the South London Hospital, went well enough. My case was one of bronchiectasis in a young boy of 14, which, since I had met this condition in my practice, was a piece of good fortune. I felt I had written a sound report. But when it came to the viva voce my luck seemed to change completely. The "viva" procedure at the College of Physicians had its peculiarities. On two successive days each candidate was questioned, in turn, by two separate examiners. If at the end of the first session the candidate was found inadequate, he was handed a polite note telling him he need not return on the following day. Faced with the imminence of this fatal missive, I found to my horror that I had drawn as my first examiner a man I had heard spoken of with apprehension, Dr. Maurice Gadsby.

Gadsby was an undersized man with a pigeon chest, a tremendous "ha-ha" manner, and a beribboned monocle in his small, severe eye. Recently elected to his Fellowship, he had none of the tolerance of the older examiners, but seemed to set out deliberately to confuse and confound the candidates who came before him. Somewhat to my surprise, he greeted me, repeated my name several times, then demanded:

"Are you Richard's younger brother? Dick was at Cambridge with me, you know."

When I confessed, reluctantly, that I had no brother, he was plainly disappointed — indeed, almost aggrieved. He inspected me through the monocle.

"Were you at Cambridge?"

"No, sir."

"The other shop?"

"What shop, sir?"

"Oxford, of course."

"No, sir."

"Then what university?"

"Glasgow."

A hollow, devastating silence. He did not deign to comment but, with a supercilious lift to his brows, placed before me six slides. Five of these slides I named correctly, but the sixth I could not name. It was on this slide that Gadsby concentrated, with all the contempt of one to whom the mere mention of a Scots university was almost obscene. For five minutes he harassed me on this section — which, it appeared, was the ovum of an obscure West African parasite — then languidly, without interest, he passed me on to the next examiner, who was none other than Lord Dawson of Penn, Physician to the King.

I crossed the room with a pale face and a heavily beating heart. All the inertia I had experienced at the beginning of the week was gone now. I had an almost desperate desire to succeed. But I was convinced that Gadsby would fail me. I raised my eyes to find Lord Dawson contemplating me with a friendly, half-humorous smile.

"What's the matter?" he asked, unexpectedly.

"Nothing, sir," I stammered. "I think I've done rather badly with Dr. Gadsby — that's all."

"Never mind about that. Have a look at these specimens. Then just say anything about them that comes into your head."

Dawson smiled encouragingly. He was a handsome, fair-complexioned man of about 60 with a high forehead and a long, humorous upper lip masked by a cropped mustache. Though now perhaps the second most distinguished physician in Europe, he had known difficulties and sharp struggles in his earlier days when, coming from his native Yarrow, he had encountered prejudice and opposition in London. As he gazed at me, without seeming to do so, he could not but observe my ill-cut suit, the soft collar and shirt, the cheap tie, above all, the look of strained intensity upon my serious face, and it may have been that memories of his own youth came back to him. He nodded encouragingly as I stumbled unhappily through a commentary upon the specimens.

"Good," he said, as I concluded. He took up another specimen — it was an aneurysm of the ascending aorta — and began in a companionable manner to interrogate me. His questions gradually became wider and more searching in their scope, until finally they came to bear upon a recent specific treatment by the induction of malaria. But, opening out under his sympathetic manner, I answered well.

Finally, as he put down the glass jar, Dawson remarked:

"Can you tell me anything of the history of aneurysm?"

"Ambroise Paré," I answered, and my examiner had already begun his approving nod, "is presumed to have first discovered the condition." Lord Dawson's face showed surprise.

"Why 'presumed'? Paré *did* discover aneurysm."

I reddened, then turned pale as I plunged on:

"Well, sir, that's what the textbooks say. But I happened to be reading Celsus, brushing up my Latin, when I definitely came across the word *aneurismus*. Celsus knew aneurysm. He described it in full. And that was a matter of 15 centuries before Paré!"

There was a silence. I raised my eyes, prepared for kindly satire from His Majesty's physician. Decidedly he was looking at me with a queer expression, and for a long time he was silent.

"Doctor," he exclaimed at last, "you are the first candidate in

this examination hall who has ever told me something original, and something which I did not know. I congratulate you."

I turned scarlet again.

"Just tell me one thing more — as a matter of personal curiosity," he concluded. "What do you regard as the main principle — the, shall I say, basic idea which you keep before you when you are exercising the practice of your profession?"

There was a pause while I reflected desperately. At length, feeling I was spoiling all the good effect I had created, I blurted out:

"I suppose — I suppose I keep telling myself never to take anything for granted."

"Thank you, Doctor. . . . Thank you very much."

A few minutes later I went downstairs with the other candidates. At the foot of the stairs a liveried porter stood with a little pile of envelopes before him. As the candidates went past he handed an envelope to each of them. The candidate walking out next to me tore his open quickly. His expression altered; he said quietly, with impeccable good form:

"It would appear I'm not wanted tomorrow." Then, forcing a smile, "How about you?"

My fingers were shaking. I could barely read. Dazedly I accepted congratulations. My chances were still alive. I walked down to an A.B.C. tearoom and treated myself to a double malted milk. I thought tensely, "If I don't get through now, after all this, I'll — I'll walk in front of a bus."

The next day passed grindingly. Barely half of the original candidates remained, and it was rumored that out of these another half would go. At last it was over. At four o'clock in the afternoon I came out of the cloakroom, spent and melancholy, pulling on my coat. Then I became aware of Dawson of Penn standing before the big open fire in the hall. I made to pass. But Dawson, for some reason, was holding out his hand, smiling, speaking to me, telling me — telling me that I was now a Member of the Royal College of Physicians.

Dear God, I had done it! I had *done* it! I was alive again, gloriously alive. I dashed down to the nearest post office, bumping and cannoning through the crowds, missing the wheels of taxis and omnibuses, racing to telephone news of the miracle back home. But no, some latent dramatic instinct made me hold things a little longer in suspense. Instead of the full, effusive message I had planned, I sent simply a brief wire asking my wife to come at once to London . . . no more than that curt command. She obeyed, fearing the worst, expecting to find me sick in hospital, perhaps on the verge of suicide. I met her at Victoria Station, tense and pale, with a dreadful glitter in my eye. Then I smiled and hugged her, gave her the incredible news, blatantly assured her that we were already on the way to Harley Street.

How good life seemed at that moment! How wonderful to share this joy with one so deeply loved! At first neither of us could speak; then we both started to talk at once. I crowded her into a taxi, whirled off to the Savoy. We celebrated recklessly on a seven-course spread; went on to a musical comedy; then to a champagne supper at the Café Royal, from which we emerged in a state of such sublime elation that the very pavements danced and swayed beneath our feet. We were both exhausted when, late the next evening, we reached the clear cold air of our mountain village and once again saw, under the high vault of heaven, the calm and reassuring stars.

## CHAPTER 13

IT WAS not without some pangs of regret that we prepared to leave Tredegar. For three years now we had lived in the town. Here we had really taken up the yoke of married life, here our first child had been born.

The work which I had done might not rank high in the social or professional scale. Yet I had made many friends among the miners and officials of the surrounding collieries. Always at Christ-

mas I received evidence of their regard in a host of homely presents—a couple of ducks or chickens from one, a print of fresh butter from another, a hand-tufted rug from a third.

There was a quality in this gratitude which moved me profoundly—something which went deep down to the very roots of life. Then why should I be leaving? Most of my classmates at the University had already settled down permanently in steady provincial practices. Alas, in me the urge to move forward was not to be denied.

LONDON in springtime captivated us from the first. Could anything be more enchanting for two people who had never before been there in that delicious season? Against the azure sky the outline of the city stood clear and glittering, crowned majestically by the dome of St. Paul's. The Thames, sparkling in the sunshine, glided beneath its graceful bridges. In Kensington Gardens, where well-dressed children trotted beside proud, bestreamered nannies, the lilacs and pink chestnuts were blooming around the statue of Peter Pan. Throughout the West End, in Piccadilly, Bond Street and Mayfair, the fashionable throng paraded. Soon, in the warm dusk, open landaulets would purr softly through the streets, bearing to the ballet, to the opera, dark handsome gentlemen in evening dress, with lustrous ladies in low-cut gowns. And we, yes, we were part of all this gorgeous, this glittering parade. . . .

It was wonderful indeed, yet that first year in London was marked by much hardship and by an intensity of purpose which never for a moment relaxed. After many weeks of searching—while our small capital dwindled—for a suitable practice that was for sale, I found an elderly practitioner with an excellent reputation who wished to retire and was willing to accept a small amount down, the balance to be paid quarterly out of receipts. The practice was in Bayswater, a rather run-down quarter given over to boarding-houses, but very near the best residential districts. The doctor's residence was included in the sale.

For months it was an uphill struggle. Winter came, and I had never known one so desperately cold. A poisonous yellow London fog penetrated everywhere, making one cough continually, piercing the marrow of one's bones. Our water pipes froze, then burst, flooding the basement, turning the kitchen into a swamp. Except for a gas fire in the consulting room, we could afford no heating in the house at all. Going to bed at night, we dressed up in all our warmest clothes, as though for a polar expedition; then, for the look of things, put our pajamas on top.

Even in my assistantship at Tredegar we had lived better. Then we were always sure of a blazing fire and a hot meal. Now, more often than not, we had neither. All our small receipts seemed consecrated to paying off our quarterly obligation.

We ate infrequently and only the cheapest kinds of food. How well do I remember coming in, fagged—less with work than anxiety—and sitting down to a dish that we were sick of. "What kind of doctor am I?" I would mutter. "Is nobody ever sick in this part of town?" More often than not, however, I would begin to eat silently, having first glanced across at my wife. "Have you had your milk?" Yes, she was supposed to drink milk, for on top of all this worry, our second son was due—and in truth he appeared in about three months.

By keeping our sense of humor and laughing off our trials and discouragements we managed to survive. And it was wonderful when the tide gradually turned and began, vigorously, to flow our way. It is true that I worked desperately hard. To attain a particular objective, one must offer unsparingly the sum total of one's capabilities—and in these first 12 months I did not take a single half day's holiday. Yet I must admit that good fortune had its part in our ultimate success. I was lucky to make friends with the policeman on traffic duty in our neighborhood, who got me many a useful fee for casualty work, and with the proprietor of the neighborhood chemist's shop, who often sent along customers who had asked to be "recommended" to a good doctor.



A growing reputation is a thrilling, tingling tonic for the struggling practitioner. Instead of sitting chafing, waiting for patients to arrive, the entire day now seemed too short for fulfillment of the increasing demands made upon me. As though this were not enough, an event occurred which must surely have been arranged by a benevolent Providence.

Late one November evening, I answered the doorbell to find a young maidservant in a breathless panic of agitation. Her mistress, Mrs. Arbuthnot, at No. 5 Palace Gardens, had taken poison. The maid had run for the family doctor only to find that he was away from home. Would I, in Heaven's name, come at once? Within four minutes we were at a small but handsome flat. In the bedroom, collapsed on the old-fashioned brass bedstead and quite unconscious, was a fragile little old woman in a lace nightgown. Upon the bedside table were two bottles of medicine, identical in size and shape: the one an obvious bismuth stomach mixture marked "One tablespoonful as required"; the other, dark blue in color and bearing a scarlet label: "The Liniment. Poison. Not to be taken internally."

Little imagination was needed to deduce what had happened: the old lady, falling asleep, had felt a twinge of indigestion, had reached drowsily for a dose of the palliative mixture, had mistakenly swallowed a portion of the lethal liniment. But at that moment there was no time to dwell on theories. The old lady was almost gone, the pulse a mere flicker in her slender wrist. But what was the poison? I must decide instantly. The fixed, dilated pupils, that dry flushed skin, the injected eyeballs and fluttering heartbeats suggested one thing—belladonna—a supposition partly borne out by the greenish color and sickly smell. Now belladonna is a powerful depressant which, acting through the vagus nerve, paralyzes the respiratory center in the brain. Already my patient had begun to gasp convulsively. It must be belladonna . . . yet . . . on the other hand, there were at least six other deliriant narcotics which could produce the same effect.

Well—I must risk it. Quickly I passed a stomach tube, blessing the practice in Lochlea Asylum which had given me skill in this difficult art, and washed out the old lady's stomach with a saline solution. Next I pumped into her 15 milligrams of diamorphine hydrochloride, perfect antidote to the deadly element in belladonna, yet toxic enough in its own right, if my diagnosis was wrong, to ease her quietly to a better world. Anxiously I studied her, awaiting the result. At first I thought she was gone. Soon, however, she began to breathe better, the pulse strengthened, and after about 15 minutes she sighed, opened her eyes, and looked glassily at me.

"Young man," she murmured, "what are you doing in my bedroom in your dressing gown?"

Then she tried to go to sleep again. But we would not, by any means, permit her to do so. All night long, despite her pleadings, the little maid and I marched her up and down the apartment, pausing only at intervals to dose her with black coffee well laced with stimulant. When morning came the effects of the drug had worn off and, in about a week, despite the apparent frailty of her constitution and her advanced age—she had long since passed her 70th year—she made a complete recovery.

Firmly resisting my attempt to return her to the care of her own doctor, whom she characterized as a gouty old fool, she adopted me as her physician, insisting that I visit her every day. Thus began my acquaintance, ripening quickly to deep friendship, with one of the most remarkable old ladies I have ever known.

Of Spanish extraction—her maiden name was Mina da Costa—she had been born in Buenos Aires and had married, of all people, an adventurous expatriate Scotsman. Much of her life had been spent in Mexico, where her husband had managed, and finally owned a large silver mine near Asunsolo and where, during the revolution of 1917, he had been fatally shot. She had traveled, in later years, to every corner of the globe, to countries as far

apart as India and Brazil, climes as different as Persia and Peru. A complete cosmopolitan, she had lived lavishly. Even now, restricted physically and, to a certain extent, financially, she still maintained her cheerful, worldly outlook, and in her bright, bird-like eye there burned, with a kind of humorous irony, the determination to continue to enjoy her life to the last gasp.

There was in her, apparently, not a shred of sentiment. In contrast to those patients who profusely, often tearfully, voiced their gratitude, then left the district without paying their bills, she never thanked me for saving her life. But one day when I called, she handed me in silence a small tissue-wrapped package. It was an exquisite gold cigarette case, inscribed with my monogram, the phrase *Recuerdo de Mina*, and the date 30:4:29. When I attempted to express my appreciation, she brushed aside my words.

A few days later her son, Manuel Arbuthnot, called upon me. He was a man of about 40, short and suave, with brilliant dark eyes, smooth olive complexion and glossy black hair. Dressed in dark broadcloth, a pearl in his somber gray tie, he conveyed an impression of perfect elegance, a trifle overpolished perhaps, yet restrained by impeccable good taste. Such a man, son of such a mother, might well be expected to follow some bizarre pursuit, and I was not surprised when he informed me that he was head buyer for the West End *maison* named Brunelle's, whose clientele included many of London's most fashionable women.

Manuel's visit was brief. He spoke a little of a recent business trip to Paris, thanked me politely for my attention to his mother, then rose to go. As he left me at the front door he handed me, with an almost imperceptible bow, his card. At least, I fancied it to be his card until, a moment later, I discovered it to be the address of a firm of tailors: Sandon and Company, 12 Savile Row. Involuntarily, I burst out laughing, but it was not a particularly merry laugh—I felt that my visitor was rather too cold a customer for my taste and that his gratitude had been expressed in a somewhat peculiar form.

However, I had reason to regret this hasty judgment, for presently there arrived at my surgery a number of the staff of Brunelle's—seamstresses, messenger girls and *vendeuses*. Then came a bevy of those glamorous creatures who acted as mannequins for the house and whose function was, of course, to sell fantastically costly creations, in which they themselves looked ravishing, to women no longer young, fighting a perpetual battle with expanding waistlines. When I cured their coughs and colds, they were quick to accept me as a counselor and confidant and to recommend me not only to their friends but also to their clients.

This was a tremendous benefit. A doctor is not permitted to advertise—it is the process of recommendation which does the trick. Thus calls began to come in, at first gradually, but then with increasing frequency, from parts of London outside my own district, and far superior to it in social standing. I went to South Kensington, to Knightsbridge, to Mayfair, entering these fine houses in the beginning with great timidity, then with confidence, and finally with that assurance which springs from the knowledge of one's success.

Most of these patients were women, many of them rich, idle, spoiled and neurotic. A young doctor with a Scots accent strongly recommended by one of Manuel's young mannequins, was a distinct novelty, regarded with the curious interest they might bestow upon a species of new lap dog. Yet I was no lap dog. I was firm, I was stern. I bullied and I commanded. I even invented a new disease for them—asthenia—which means no more than weakness or general debility.

Having created a disease, it was essential to produce the remedy. At this time the system of medication by intramuscular injection was coming into vogue—a process whereby tonic medicaments were introduced to the patient's blood stream by hypodermic syringe. Later on, this technique was largely discounted as being in no way superior to the old-fashioned method of oral administration, but at that moment it suited me to perfection.

Injections for asthenia now became as much the mode and as eagerly sought after as Manuel's new spring gowns. Again and yet again my sharp and shining needle sank into fashionable buttocks, bared upon the finest linen sheets. I became expert, indeed, superlative, in the art of penetrating the worst end of the best society with a dexterity which rendered the operation almost painless—my standard preamble being, "I assure you, dear lady, this will cause you no inconvenience"—and which increased my reputation by leaps and bounds.

Strange though it may seem, the results of this complex process were surprisingly successful. Asthenia gave these bored and idle women an interest in life. My tonics braced their languid nerves. I dieted them, insisted on a regime of moderate exercise and early hours. I even persuaded two errant wives to return to their long-suffering husbands, with the result that within nine months they had other matters than asthenia to occupy them.

For one who had hitherto been struggling in a middle-class surgery for dribblets of five shillings and even half a crown, this turn of events was a godsend, a lifesaver—in brief, immensely profitable. My treatment would never have been deemed worth while had I not charged for it an appropriately exorbitant fee. Where pence had previously been my recompense, guineas now poured in—a golden stream.

Why should I be hypocritical and pretend that this success was not gratifying to me? It brought many pleasant things in its train. Presently our obligation for the practice I had bought was fully discharged, the house repainted and properly furnished. There was a neat maid to open the door, and a nice nurse to take the children out for afternoons in the park. I had been put up for a good club, escaped occasionally for an afternoon's golf, and I made my visits in a new Austin coupé.

Often I would pause and, in a kind of daze, wonder at the circumstances which had brought us all this . . . and, we hoped, heaven, too. At the back of my mind I was conscious now and

then of a vague dissatisfaction as the character of my practice changed. More and more I was preoccupied by my "high-class" patients, less and less by ordinary working people. While I enjoyed the sweets of prosperity and reveled in the sense of fulfilled ambition — nothing is more thrilling to the Scot than the knowledge that he is "getting on" — I could not but contrast the work I was now doing with the work I had once done.

The climax came one afternoon when I stepped out of my consulting room for a cup of tea, very well pleased with myself, having just conducted to the door a new patient — an erect, military-looking man with a coppery complexion and a mustache.

"Do you know who that was?" I inquired smugly of my wife. She shook her head.

"Sir ———, of the Indian Civil Service." I mentioned a name prominently before the public of that day. "I'm getting the men now as well as the women. He was referred to me by his wife."

"What's wrong with him?"

"Not much," I chuckled. "Touch of liver. He's going to have a course of injections at five guineas a time. Think of it. When we started here I had to sweat like the devil for a miserable two and six. And now, five guineas for three minutes' work."

She did not answer but, in silence, poured me another cup of tea. Something in her reserve nettled me.

"Well, what about it? Don't you think I deserve some credit?" I smoothed the lapels of my well-cut Savile Row suit. "After all, I've come a long way from the days when I tramped up the miners' rows in dirty oilskins and hobnail pit boots."

She looked me straight between the eyes.

"I think I liked you better in those hobnail boots. You thought more of your cases and less of your guineas when you wore them."

I reddened to the roots of my hair. I wanted to shout "There's no satisfying you!" — but I surprised myself by keeping silent. Then, after a long pause, I mumbled:



"Perhaps you're right. . . . Mustn't ever forget those days. . . . They were worth while."

## CHAPTER 14

WE HAD NOW been five years in Bayswater. Our two boys were in school, our lives moved so regularly and smoothly that my dear wife had the delusion we were permanently settled, that nothing could now arise to ruffle the even course of her life.

We had succeeded, amazingly, in our assault upon London, which had once intimidated us and seemed so difficult to conquer. The practice which I had taken over now extended in scope and character far beyond its original limits. I had come to know many of the leading physicians and surgeons of the day, and called in consultation men like Lord Horder, Sir Arbuthnot Lane and Sir Morley Fletcher. Recently I had been appointed medical officer to that great department store, Whiteley's Limited.

One morning, however, I was shaken by an unusually severe attack of indigestion—a condition I had been staving off with increasing doses of bicarbonate of soda since my student days. On this occasion I stopped in to see Dr. Bennett, a good friend of mine who specialized in maladies of the digestive organs.

I expected a bottle of bismuth and an invitation to play golf. Instead, I received the shock of my life. He told me, seriously, that I had a chronic duodenal ulcer which would certainly perforate if I did not take myself in hand. His sentence was immutable—low diet and, as soon as I could arrange it, six months' complete rest in the country. Shaken, I rose from the couch in his consulting room. . . . How could I possibly leave a practice so completely individual as mine for such a period? With my impatient temperament I had never been able to endure an assistant. A locum tenens—how well I knew the breed—would ruin my years of careful work within six weeks. Then, as I began to put on my shirt, a strange, irrational thought suddenly trans-



fixed me. I stood for a moment, meditating, looking back toward the longings of my youth. Then I nodded, slowly and solemnly, to myself. It was the most important gesture of my life.

For two weeks I said nothing of my interview with Bennett; then, one spring afternoon, I came in, sat down, gazed at the ceiling, and in that dreamy voice which betokens my most irrational decisions, remarked to my wife:

"It's high time we cleared out of here."

She stared at me.

"What on earth do you mean?"

"Precisely what I say, my dear."

"But we're happy here, absolutely settled, with the children and everything. You've always had that bee in your bonnet, never content, wanting to dash off at a minute's notice." She paused for breath. "In any case, you never could sell the practice here." She brought out the argument triumphantly. "It's much too large and personal."

"My dear . . . please don't get mad. . . . I'm afraid I have sold it."

She turned white. She couldn't believe it. Then she saw that it was true. She whispered palely:

"What are you going to do?"

I was silent with, for once, a shamefaced air.

"As a matter of fact . . . I'm going . . . to try to write."

"Oh Lord," she gasped, bursting into tears. "You *have* gone crazy."

At this point I felt I had better establish my sanity. I explained, trying not to alarm her, what the doctor had told me. Then I went on, in a low voice, apologetic yet firm:

"I've always had this queer urge to be a writer . . . ever since I was a youngster. But naturally if I'd told them that back home in Scotland, they'd have thought I was wrong in the head. I had to do something sensible instead. That's why I went in for medicine. Oh, I admit I liked it all right. I like it quite well

now, I might even go so far as to say that I'm good at it. But all the time I've felt this other thing at the back of my mind. When I've been attending my patients, seeing people as they really are, I've kept thinking what stories I could make out of them. I wanted to describe the characters I was meeting, get something down on paper. Of course, I hadn't the time; you need quiet and detachment for that sort of thing, and we were always tearing so hard to get on. Well, now we have got on. I can take six months, even a year, to give myself a chance to write. At least I'll get the bug out of my system. It's a million to one I'm no good. And if I'm not, I can always come back to the treadmill."

There was a long silence. She could not deny that, through the years, she had suspected in me this desire for self-expression. But she had never taken it seriously. When, after dinner and a hard day's work, I had vaguely mentioned my longing to do a book, she smiled at me kindly over her knitting and led me on to talk about my golf handicap. But this was different. This wild project, this disruption, once again, of our pleasant domesticity, seemed to her sheer lunacy.

And it was all fixed, settled and arranged. What a man! Had he no thought of the children or of his wife? She boiled with anger and dismay.

"Remember that chap Gauguin," I reminded her diffidently. "The Paris banker who, without warning, suddenly threw up his humdrum life and sailed off to paint pictures — and good ones — in Tahiti."

"Tahiti," she moaned, "and after that I suppose it will be Timbuktu. For heaven's sake, be sensible. What did Dr. Bennett say was wrong with you?"

"Oh, just a gastric condition. But I must have a rest."

"Yes . . . yes . . ." she murmured unsteadily. "You haven't really been well lately. . . ."

Torn by conflicting emotions, she smiled wanly, then laid her head upon my shoulder and dissolved into tears.

The place selected for our preposterous adventure was Dalchenna farm, a small steading in the western Highlands of Scotland. And three weeks later, when all the details of the transfer of the practice had been settled, we set out for this remote spot, the car jammed with our belongings, our two boys wild with excitement.

I will acknowledge that my mood at the outset was scarcely a confident one. Yet as we sped along, that fine June day, my heart lifted — after all, we had not had a real holiday in years. And when at last we reached the moors and mountains of our native countryside, I stopped the car and turned to my wife. Her glance was as tender as my own and suddenly, forgivingly, she threw her arms around my neck. Lambs were frisking in the meadow, a stream, fretted by the sunshine, rippled by the roadside, our children, released from the back seat, were gathering wild daffodils.

"It's wonderful to be back again," she whispered in my ear. "You'll get well here, dear . . . well and strong. We'll have a lovely time. . . . And we'll forget all about that old book."

THE highland clachan of Inveraray, little more than a cluster of whitewashed cottages huddled about the castle of the Duke of Argyll, lies among a wild grandeur of mountains at the head of lovely Loch Fyne. On all sides green meadows surrounded us; beyond were woods of alder carpeted with bluebells and mitred bracken into which, as we approached, a roe deer bounded; while above towered the heather-clad hills, source of a stream, filled with trout, that tumbled down in golden spate toward the loch.

For the two boys, aged four and seven, who really had no recollection of anything but city life, the place was truly a wonderland. But for me, alas, the picture was somewhat different.

Having emphatically declared before my entire household that I *would* write a novel — tacitly implying, of course, that it was the fault of every other member of the household that I had not

written 20 novels—I found myself faced with the unpleasant necessity of justifying my rash remarks.

On the morning following our arrival, I retired, with a show of courage and deep purpose, to the top attic of the house which had been at once selected as “the room for Daddy to write in.” Firmly I opened a twopenny exercise book, firmly I joggled my fountain pen out of its habitual inertia. Firmly I poised that pen and lifted my head for inspiration.

It was a pleasant view through the window: a long green field ran down to a bay of the loch. There was movement. Six cows, couched in the shadow of a hawthorn hedge, ruminated with steady rhythm; an old goat with an arresting beard tinkled his bell in search, I thought, of dandelions; a yellow butterfly hovered indecisively above a scarlet spurt of fuchsias.

It had all a seductive, dreamlike interest. I thought I might contemplate the scene for a minute or two before settling down to work. I contemplated. Then somebody knocked at the door and said, “Lunchtime.” I started, and searched hopefully for my glorious beginning, only to find that the exercise book still retained its blank virginity.

I went downstairs and carved the mutton glumly. My two young sons were in high spirits. The younger, aged four, lisped breezily:

“Finished your book yet, Daddy?”

The elder affirmed with the superior wisdom of his three additional years:

“Don’t be silly. Daddy’s only half finished.”

Whereupon their mother smiled upon them reprovingly:

“No, dears, Daddy can only have written a chapter or two.”

I felt like a humbug. Determinedly I called to mind the aphorism of an old schoolmaster of mine. “Get it down,” he used to declare. “If it stays in your head it’ll never be anything. Get it down.” So after lunch I went straight upstairs and began to get my ideas down.

I could fill a volume with the emotional experiences of those next three months. Although the theme of the novel I wished to write was already outlined in my mind—the tragic record of a man's egotism and bitter pride—I was, beyond these naïve fundamentals, lamentably unprepared. Most novelists who suddenly blaze into print in their thirties have practiced their vice secretly for years. But I, until this moment, had written nothing but prescriptions and scientific papers. It took great determination to drive me through my inhibitions, like a circus rider through a paper hoop.

I had no pretensions to technique, no knowledge of style or form. The difficulty of simple statement staggered me. I spent hours looking for an adjective. I corrected and recorrected until the page looked like a spider's web; then I tore it up and started all over again.

All through that lovely summer, while the others enjoyed themselves, I remained chained to my desk. Although at the time I maintained a stoic silence, I will now confess to the miseries I went through. There were redeeming moments when, carried away by what I had written, living with my characters in the drama they were enacting, I dared to hope that I was doing something fine; but for the most part I felt that all my drudgery was quite useless, that I was wasting my time in sheer futility.

The worst moment came when I was halfway through the book, and the typescript of the first chapters arrived from a secretarial bureau in London. As I read the opening pages, a wave of horror swept over me. I thought, "Have I written this awful stuff? No one will ever read it. No one will ever publish it. I simply can't go on!"

I had the impulse there and then to throw up the whole project, destroy everything I had written. It was irresistible. I got up with a set face, took the manuscript to the back door and flung it in the ash heap.

When the news was known, a dire silence fell upon the house.

I remember so well—it started to rain, a dank Scots afternoon and, scared by my scowl, my wife and the two boys left me without a word.

Drawing a sullen satisfaction from my surrender, or, as I preferred to phrase it, my return to sanity, I went for a walk in the drizzling rain. Halfway down the loch shore I came upon old Angus, the neighboring farmer, patiently and laboriously ditching a patch of the bogged and peaty heath which made up the bulk of his hard-won little croft. He gazed up at me in some surprise; he knew of my intention and, with that inborn Scottish reverence for “letters,” had tacitly approved it. When I told him what I had just done, and why, his keen blue eyes scanned me with disappointment and a queer contempt. He was a silent man, and it was long before he spoke. Even then his words were cryptic.

“No doubt you’re the one that’s right, doctor, and I’m the one that’s wrong. . . .” He seemed to look right through me. “My father ditched this bog all his days and never made a pasture. I’ve dug it all *my* days and I’ve never made a pasture. But, pasture or no pasture”—he placed his foot on the spade—“I cannot help but dig. For my father knew and I know that if you only dig enough, a pasture can be made here.”

I understood. I watched his dogged figure, working away, determined to see the job through at all costs. In silence I tramped back to the house, drenched, shamed, furious, and picked the soggy bundle from the ash heap. I dried it in the kitchen oven. Then I flung it on the table and set to work again with a kind of frantic desperation. I would not be beaten, I would not give in. Night after night, keeping myself awake by sheer will power, I wrote harder than ever. At last, toward the end of September, I wrote “*Finis*.” I had kept my word. I had created a book. Whether it was good, bad or indifferent I did not know.

With a sigh of incredible relief, I packed the manuscript and dispatched it in an untidy parcel to a publisher whose address I found in a two-year-old almanac. The days succeeded one another,



and nothing happened. I had no illusions—I was fully aware that aspiring authors acquire rejection slips more readily than checks, and that first manuscripts usually come back a score of times before being accepted—if indeed they are ever accepted at all. My surprise and delight may therefore be imagined when, one morning in October, I received a wire from the head of the publishing firm which I had selected, informing me that the novel had been accepted for publication, offering an advance of 50 pounds, and asking me to come to London immediately.

As we read the telegram, a stunned awe fell upon the farm living room. Fifty pounds, cash down, seemed a lot of money, and perhaps later there might even be a little more, on account of royalties. Pale and rather shaky, I muttered:

“Maybe, with luck and economy, I can make a living as a writer. Get the timetable and find out when the next train leaves for London.”

Looking back upon the events which followed, it seems incredible, even now, how swiftly, how amazingly, from that uncertain moment, the flood tide of success was loosed. This first novel, *Hatter's Castle*, written despairingly on twopenny exercise books, thrown out and rescued from the rubbish heap at the 11th hour, was published in the spring of 1930. It was acclaimed by critics, chosen by the Book Society, translated into 21 languages, serialized, dramatized and filmed. It went into endless editions, has sold, to date, approximately three million copies, and goes on selling still. It launched me upon a literary career with such an impetus that, once and for all, I hung up my stethoscope and put away that little black bag—my medical days were over.



A. J. Cronin



IN THE selection from *Adventures in Two Worlds* presented in this volume, A. J. Cronin tells the story of the trials and successes of his early life. With the publication of *Hatter's Castle* in 1931, a new world opened up for him. Many of his nine subsequent novels have been outstanding best sellers, fulfilling the promise critics saw in his first work.

Many who enjoy this condensation from *Adventures in Two Worlds* will recognize in the scenes of young Dr. Cronin's struggles the authentic backgrounds of such well-remembered novels as *The Stars Look Down*, *The Citadel* and *The Green Years*. For, as he says, "an author can write only from his own knowledge."

Though he is one of the most successful authors of our time, A. J. Cronin finds writing no easy task. "For me it is a dreadful anguish," he says. "If I am eventually lost, which God forbid, there will be no need of everlasting fire. It will be enough to keep me writing and writing through the eternal darkness."

*Illustrations by Henry Pitz*

# *The* GABRIEL HORN

*A condensation of the book by*

FELIX HOLT



"The Gabriel Horn," copyright 1951 by Felix Holt, is published at \$3 by E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc.,  
300 Fourth Ave., New York 10, N. Y.

**B**IG ELI had cut the Gabriel Horn off a swamp steer in Carolina. It had taken him two years to season and scrape it paper-thin, and its music floated out cool and clear as dew on a spider web. To Little Eli, it was the symbol of his father's might as a hunter and as a man. It was a symbol, too, of a good life—the healthy, rugged, free life of the Kentucky frontier.

Little Eli knew that redheaded Hannah, the pretty bound girl, would be better for his father than prim and proper Miss Susie Spann, and he resented the plot hatched to make Big Eli a placid homesteader. Through Little Eli's eyes we watch the drama develop against a background of house-raising and fox hunts, of tobacco trading and bullwhip fights.

The authentic flavor of pioneer life, with all of its color, violence and occasional tenderness, is sharply recaptured in the words of one of the most beguiling boys of recent fiction.

*"The Gabriel Horn is as rare and true and captivating a story of the American frontier as has appeared in years . . . a book with a fresh tang and flavor to it of irresistible charm."* — Orville Prescott in *New York Times*

*"An enchanting story of two comrades who believed that love and freedom were the most important things in life a man could have. Their wonderful adventures on the Kentucky frontier are certain to delight you."*

— Joseph M. Grant in *The Saturday Review of Literature*

## CHAPTER 1

THE CUMBERLANDS were a month behind us when we came to the Cadiz road. A night and another day would bring our journey to The Purchase to an end, so Big Eli and I were stepping an easy pace. Our hunting dog, Faro, was taking his time, too, and now and then he would lie down in the dusty road to wait for us to catch up with him. We had traveled the toll road a mile or so when he bristled and growled. Ahead of us was a stagecoach with the left rear wheel sagged to the ground like a wounded rabbit dragging a leg. The broken wheel was on the ground beside it and three men were looking on. Two of them were wearing dusters and they were arguing with the driver, a skinny little man in shiny boots and green coat, but they stopped to watch us as we came up.

The driver asked Big Eli, "Are you going to Cadiz, my good man?"

"Through it," said Big Eli.

"Then stop at the blacksmith's and have him fetch us a wheel," said the driver.

Big Eli reached down with his right hand and took hold of the sagging axle. Then, as easy as picking up his hat, he raised it to hip level. "Why don't you histe it like this and run alongside to Cadiz?" he said in fun.

The two men in dusters laughed but the little driver didn't. Big Eli let the axle back to the ground and wiped his hands on his buckskin britches. "I'll see the smithy," he said like he was sorry for poking fun at the driver.

The driver looked at the Gabriel Horn swinging from the rawhide thong over Big Eli's shoulder. "You're a hunter?" he asked and Big Eli said he was. The driver reached up to the high seat of the coach and brought down a long brass horn that looked like a candle taper.

"You can outlift me," he said, "but I'll bet I can outblow you."

"I've got no betting money," said Big Eli.

"Then I dast you for nothing," the little driver said.

"What's the rules?" Big Eli asked.

"How many blows can you make with one breath?"

"I never counted," said Big Eli. "How many can you make?"

"More than you," said the driver.

Big Eli's chest began to swell. I was glad he had unlaced his jacket that afternoon when the sun got so hot. Laces and buttons wouldn't hold when Big Eli sucked wind to blow the Gabriel Horn.

"Go!" said the driver, and began counting as the first blast came out of the Gabriel Horn as cool and clear as dew on a spider web.

When the first echo came back from the ridge of hills to the west, I was certain that the two men in dusters would agree that our hunting horn sounded prettier than the brass coach horn even if Big Eli should lose on blows. Big Eli had cut it off a swamp steer in Carolina the year I was born and it had taken him two years to season and scrape it paper-thin. Nobody but Big Eli had ever blown it, though once I had asked him to let me try.

"It takes a man's wind to blow the Gabriel Horn," he had said. "Someday you'll grow up to it, Little Eli."

Once I asked him why he called it the Gabriel Horn and he laughed. "Come Judgment Day, the Archangel Gabriel will want to swap," he said.

"Seven . . . eight . . . nine," I heard the driver counting and then Big Eli lowered the Gabriel Horn, sucked in his breath and wiped his lips on his sleeve.

"Your turn," said Big Eli.

The driver stepped back a pace and tossed his horn to the seat of the coach.

"I couldn't tie that," he said. "You win."

I was mighty proud. When we were out of earshot, I said, "He bit off more than he could chaw."

"I'm not so certain," said Big Eli, and I could tell by the way he said it that he thought the coach driver had made a fool of him in some way.

It was about an hour later when we got to Cadiz. People were standing in front of the tavern watching us as we came up the road. In front of the others was a fat man with an apron tied about his middle and beside him a girl with red hair and freckles and she had on an apron, too. I thought she was mighty pretty.

"They'll tell us where to find the smithy," Big Eli said to me, but he never got a chance to ask. The fat man in the apron was looking at the Gabriel Horn swinging from Big Eli's shoulder.

"Did you blow that horn about an hour ago?" he asked.

Big Eli nodded. "I did," he said.

"How many times did you blow it?" the fat man asked.

"Nine," said Big Eli. "Why?"

"You bought yourself nine chickens, mister," said the fat man, setting his lips as tight across his teeth as a closed bear trap. Everybody but the redheaded girl began to laugh at what the fat man said. She was looking at Big Eli's long yellow hair which tumbled over his broad shoulders.

"You're mistaken," said Big Eli.

The fat man started screaming and the others crowded around us.

"I killed nine chickens when I heard that horn," the fat man yelled, "and you'll pay for 'em!"

I saw that Big Eli was getting mad. "Why did you kill them?" he asked.

"I thought it was the coach horn," said the fat man, "and you'll pay for 'em!"

"I'm light of money," Big Eli told him and he wasn't lying.

"Then you'll work it out," yelled Fatty, and he made a grab for Big Eli's arm.

Big Eli handed me the long rifle. "Hold the dog, too," he said. As I got Faro by the scruff of the neck I saw Big Eli swing a

flat hand. It smacked the fat man's jaw like the tail of a 'gator, reeling him into the crowd. "Now, don't lay hold of me no more," said Big Eli.

"Arrest him, Constable!" the fat man screamed at a man about half the size of Big Eli. Big Eli grinned when he saw him.

"It'll take more than him," he said, laughing.

The Constable swept his eyes around the crowd. "I'll deputize the lot of y'," he said. "Let's take him!"

Big Eli clenched his fists and shifted his weight.

There was a rush and the girl screamed. Man after man went down as Big Eli swung his fists, but there were too many of them. They brought him down in the dust and sat on him until the Constable got out his wrist irons and locked them on. I was holding Faro and crying when they pulled Big Eli to his feet and began shoving him toward a stone smokehouse in back of the tavern.

"You come with me," I heard the redheaded girl say and I felt her soft hand on my shoulder. I looked up and saw that she was scared, too, for there were tears in her eyes. Faro and I followed her through the taproom into the kitchen of the tavern. She hurried to the open fireplace where two big skillets were resting on a bed of hot coals, and when she lifted the lids I counted nine chickens, all sputtering in their own grease. She saw me counting them and I saw her smile like she'd rather laugh but didn't dast.

"Old Decker thought it was the coach coming when he heard the horn," she said to me. "Nine blasts of the coach horn means nine passengers to feed." Then I remembered the biggety little coach driver and I knew then why he didn't blow against Big Eli. He had got even with Big Eli for lifting the coach and making him look puny in front of two passengers.

The redheaded girl gave me a cup of milk and some cold biscuits. "That's enough for now," she said. I wished she hadn't brought me to the kitchen. After smelling the chickens in the skillets, milk and cold biscuits didn't taste so good, hungry as I was. I drank the milk and gave the biscuits to Faro.



It was long after dark when the two men in dusters came into the tavern and told what had happened on the toll road. I could see them in the taproom and hear them laughing when Old Decker told them what had happened to Big Eli. They ate two of the chickens and Old Decker and the Constable ate one apiece, leaving five still in the skillet. When they were through eating, the girl brought out the dishes and closed the door to the taproom.

Old Decker, I guessed, was the fat man in the apron.

"My name's Hannah," she said, and I told her mine was Little Eli Wakefield.

"Then your father must be Big Eli," she said, grinning, and I said that was right. She began slicing chicken and putting it on two plates. Then she dipped up slices of yellow yams that had been stewing in the chicken grease and over it all she ladled thick gravy. She put the plates on the table, one in front of me, and sat down. "Let's eat, Little Eli," she said.

I wondered if she was Old Decker's kin, but she didn't look like him. It was my guess that she was about 17 years old. Her dress seemed a little tight for her but it showed how round and firm she was. When she smiled her eyes almost closed and her lips barely parted. She was the prettiest girl I had ever seen.

She asked me a lot of questions, and I told her that Big Eli and I came from mountain country and that we were going to The Purchase, which was the new land west of the Tennessee that General Andy Jackson had bought from the Chickasaw Indians.

"Lots of folks are going there," she said, "but I hear that all of the good land has been bought up now."

"We're not going for land," I said. "I've got an uncle and aunt there."

"Visiting?" she asked.

"Big Eli got a letter from Uncle Zack," I said. "We'll live with him and Aunt Soph, I reckon."

"It's a wilderness, they tell," she said, "and the trees are so big they black the sky like night."

The door of the taproom opened and the fat man with the apron came in and looked at me and the plate full of vittles.

"He was hungry," Hannah said.

Old Decker picked up my plate and she shouted, "Don't do that!" as he tossed the chicken and yams in the swill bucket. She started to get up from the chair but he slapped her across the face with the back of his hand. "Scraps are good enough for the likes of him," he said.

He dropped a bunch of keys on the table. "I'm driving the smithy out the toll road to put a wheel on the coach," he said. "Lock up, come midnight."

He left by the back door. Hannah followed and stood listening until she heard him drive off.

She got out two plates from the cupboard and filled them and gave one to me. "Does he hanker for grog or coffee with his vittles?"

I knew she meant Big Eli. "Coffee," I said, and she filled a mug from a simmering pot on the coals. She took the mug and the plate and disappeared through the back door, but she was back in a few minutes and in the light of the turpentine lamp swinging from the ceiling, I saw that her cheeks were pink and there was a sparkle in her eyes which she tried to hide by not looking at me. I finished my plate while she fed scraps to Faro; then I curled up in a chair by the open fireplace. She was washing dishes and singing as soft as a whippoorwill when I dropped off to sleep.

I don't know when it was, but I woke up with a start when I felt a hand across my mouth. The lamp was out and the only light came from the dull red coals in the fireplace.

"It's me," said Hannah in a whisper. "Don't be scared, but don't make a sound." I could make out the wrist irons the Constable had locked on Big Eli. They were on the table, and I saw a battered carpetbag on the hearth and Faro was sniffing it. Big Eli's rifle was stacked beside the carpetbag.

Hannah motioned at Faro. "Keep him quiet and come with

me," she said. She picked up the bag and the rifle while I got hold of Faro's scruff, and we left by the back door.

When we got to the smokehouse Big Eli was outside waiting for us and I knew then that she had let him out with Old Decker's keys while I slept. Faro started to whine when he saw Big Eli and Big Eli had to speak sharp to shut him up.

I yawned.

"He's too sleepy to walk," Hannah said.

"I'll tote him," said Big Eli, and with one arm he swung me to his back. Then he took the carpetbag from Hannah.

"You tote the rifle," he said to her, and they started off.

I wasn't so sleepy that I wasn't wondering about Hannah and why she was going with us and what she would do when we got to Uncle Zack's place in Humility. But it pleased me that she was going, for it was the first time I had ever been so close to a woman and heard her sing and laugh and seen her cry. Somehow I felt I had known Hannah a long, long time.

## CHAPTER 2

WE KEPT moving all night, and stopped after sunup to rest and eat the cold chicken and biscuits Hannah had brought in the carpetbag. I saw there was female riggin' in the bag, too, and guessed Hannah was aiming to stay a spell, where she was going.

"You'd better catch a wink," Big Eli said to Hannah and me after we had finished eating. "I'll stand watch in case they followed us with dogs."

She slipped off her boots and curled up under a cypress. I lay down on the soft moss not far from her, but I had slept some on Big Eli's shoulders while they traveled and I wasn't sleepy then. Soon Hannah was asleep and I lay there looking at her. Big Eli was sprawled on the riverbank with his eyes fixed on the other side, but now and then I caught him looking at her, too.

After a while he knelt down beside her, reached out a hand and

touched her on the shoulder. She didn't jump, but opened her eyes slow and looked about as if trying to make out where she was. When she saw me she smiled and sat up.

"We'll push on now," Big Eli said and stood up.

It was late afternoon before we caught sight of the Tennessee, wide and a muddy brown. We crossed by ferry, a boat just big enough to haul a wagon and team. It had to be pulled across the river by a rope strung between trees, one on our side of the river and the other across it. Big Eli paid our tote with an otter hide he had brought from The Gap. The ferryman told us the direction to follow to Humility. We set off through a canebrake, but soon we came to timber again. There was a blue haze of smoke hanging over the country and I asked Big Eli if the forest was afire.

"No," he said, "it's folks clearing timber for new ground."

I looked at the trees so big and tall that they shut out the late afternoon sun and I reckoned that folks must want land mighty bad to go to the bother of clearing them away for ground to plow and seed. Soon we passed some new ground that had been cleared a year or so before and tobacco was growing in rows but it was different from the weed I had seen in Carolina and eastern Kentucky. The leaves were bigger and greener and looked heavier, and I reckoned it must be the rich new land that made it different. Uncle Zack had said in the letter to Big Eli that someday The Purchase would grow more tobacco than the whole world set aside.

We got to Humility just at sundown, but we knew we were getting close to it before we saw it because the smell of supper was in the air.

There were a few log houses and a big barn built of sawed lumber, and supper smoke was rising from kitchen chimneys. As we got near the barn I saw a sign painted across the front of it. It read, "Zachariah Wakefield, Tobacco." The houses looked all about alike except the one nearest the barn and it had a bay window of glass and I reckoned Uncle Zack was doing as well as he claimed in his letter.

The village dogs caught our scent and came barking toward us and I hung onto Faro's scruff to keep him from getting into a fight. A skinny man with a bald head came to the door of the house with the bay window in it. He looked at us and turned to call back in the house, "Sophia!"

I guessed that was Uncle Zack Wakefield and it was.

He stepped to the yard to meet us and Aunt Soph came out of the house, wiping flour on her apron. I reckoned Uncle Zack fed her well for she was pink and chubby. Uncle Zack shook hands with Big Eli and Aunt Soph grabbed me and we hugged and kissed.

"This is Hannah," said Big Eli.

"Hannah Bolen," said Hannah, and I remembered she hadn't told us her last name.

"She's looking for kin," said Big Eli.

"Adam Bolen," she said. "He's my uncle."

"Ever hear of him, Sophia?" Uncle Zack asked.

Aunt Soph shook her head. "So many folks have been coming into The Purchase since they cut the price of land from a dollar to fifty cents an acre, a body can't know them all," she said.

"We'll inquire tomorrow," said Uncle Zack and started to herd us into the house. "Supper's nigh ready."

It was a large room with a fireplace as big as a corncrib and on one side of it was a secretary desk so tall it almost reached the rafters which were peeled walnut logs. He saw me looking at it.

"I hauled that from Carolina," he said, then looked at Big Eli and smiled proud. "And our granddaddy brought it from England in his day, eh, Elias?"

Big Eli nodded. "So they tell," he said, and stacked the rifle at the other end of the fireplace. Then he unslung the Gabriel Horn from his shoulder and hung it on a peg beside the door.

While we washed up, Aunt Soph spread the vittles on the table. There was roast hog meat and stewed turkey with flat dumplings; roasted corn ears, hot pan bread as soft and fluffy as a featherbed

tick, yellow yams and a tureen of steaming mulligatawny. In the center of the table was a mold of yellow butter shaped like a woolly lamb on a tomb rock. Two hot pies sizzled beside the oven. When I saw all the vittles I wondered why Uncle Zack was so skinny.

We were so hungry we let Uncle Zack do most of the talking and most of what he said was about himself. He told how he had come into The Purchase the day it opened for settlement and he had set up as a tobacco buyer.

"I let the other fellow clear the land and plant the weed," he said. "I'll buy it off him and ship it to New Orleans."

"He's done right well," said Aunt Soph.

Uncle Zack puffed out his chest. "We're comfortable," he said with a big smile.

We'd just finished eating when I heard Faro bark and a few seconds later there was a knock at the front door. Uncle Zack got up and opened it and I heard Hannah give a little scream and she started to cry. It was Decker, the tavern keeper from Cadiz, and the Constable who had locked the wrist irons on Big Eli.

"I'm an officer of the law," the Constable told Uncle Zack.

"We've come for him and her," said Old Decker, pointing at Big Eli and Hannah.

Aunt Soph started to cluck like a hen on eggs.

"Come inside," said Uncle Zack and he closed the door behind them.

"We don't want any trouble," said the Constable.

"There won't be any if everything is legal," said Uncle Zack.

Hannah didn't stop crying, so I stood beside her and she took my hand and squeezed it hard.

"I'm a Squire," said Uncle Zack. "Tell me what this is about."

Decker told about the nine blasts on the horn and the nine chickens, and how he and the others had put Big Eli into the smokehouse, expecting him to work out payment for the chickens. When he got that far, Uncle Zack stopped him.



"It ain't legal," he said. "You can't put a man in jail for debt unless a jury says he owes it."

"But he busted out of jail," said Old Decker.

"He wasn't in jail legally in the first place," said Uncle Zack. "Bustin' out don't count."

"Then we'll arrest him for enticing a female indenture away from her master," said the Constable.

"I'm her master," said Old Decker. "He stole her away from me."

Uncle Zack looked at Hannah. "Is that so, young woman?" he asked her and Hannah nodded.

"We're taking her back," said Decker.

"And we're taking him back for enticing her away," said the Constable.

"They're not taking us back to Cadiz," Big Eli said, looking at Hannah.

"Now, Elias, hold your temper," said Uncle Zack. "If you and this female have broke the law, you'll have to pay the penalty."

"I know about indenture law," Big Eli said.

"He didn't entice me," Hannah said. "I ran off of my own free will."

Big Eli paid her no heed. "If a man entices a female indenture from her master, he's liable to law," he said, "but if he marries her, she's not bound by contract any more."

"That's the law," said Uncle Zack, "but you didn't marry her."

Big Eli shut him up. "I enticed her away and I'm aiming to marry her!"

Aunt Soph began to sob. "What will folks say?" she said, and looked at Uncle Zack and shook her head. "What will they say?"

Uncle Zack got mad and waved his arms.

"You'll do nothing of the kind, Elias Wakefield," he shouted. "You didn't even know this female's name when you got here!"

"Don't cross me, Zack!" said Big Eli and he moved toward his brother. Uncle Zack backed up a pace and quieted down.

"It's disgraceful," said Aunt Soph and began blubbering again. I knew Aunt Soph didn't think a bound girl was fit to marry a Wakefield.

"You're a Squire," said Big Eli to Uncle Zack. "You can wed us." I saw Uncle Zack stroking his chin and thinking hard. Then he said to Decker, "If you got paid for the time the girl has to work out, you'd be satisfied, wouldn't you?"

Decker thought it over. "The contract's got a year to run."

"I'll pay it off," said Uncle Zack.

"But he's got to wed her," said the Constable, "and we're staying here until he does."

Big Eli turned to Hannah. "Are you willing?" he asked her.

"I'll have to change my dress," she said.

Aunt Soph had put the carpetbag in the bedroom and Hannah went in there and closed the door. Aunt Soph looked at Big Eli and said, "You don't know this woman, Elias."

"She don't know me, neither," he said. "It's an even swap, I reckon."



Uncle Zack and Old Decker were figuring out the money deal and drawing up a paper to make it legal. The clock on the mantel ticked on and it seemed to grow louder and louder as the seconds went by. When they got the deal down on paper Uncle Zack got a poke full of money from the tall secretary desk and looked at the clock, then turned to Aunt Soph.

"Is that female carding the warp and the woof for her bridal dress?" he asked, meaning Hannah was taking her time.

"I'll fotch her," Aunt Soph said and got up from her chair. She opened the door to the bedroom and went inside, and I heard her scream, "She's gone!" She stepped back into the doorway with her eyes bugged out like she had seen a hant.

We all rushed to the bedroom. Sure enough, Hannah and the carpetbag were gone.

There was a door that opened into the yard and I knew she had gone that way. The men ran outside to look for her, but it was dark and they didn't have a lantern. It was all of a half hour before they came back, but Hannah Bolen wasn't with them.

Uncle Zack got out his money again, counted some more and pointed to the paper he and Decker had drawn up. "Sign this," he said. Decker signed his name and Uncle Zack handed him the money. "That pays off the indenture and squares everything," Uncle Zack said and Decker and the Constable nodded.

Uncle Zack went to the front door and opened it. "Now get out of here!" he yelled at them. He slammed the door behind them, then turned to Big Eli.

"Elias," he said, "you owe me \$200."

"I'll work it out, Zack," said Big Eli.

"I'll teach you how to buy the weed," said Uncle Zack, "and I'll teach you how to grade and sell it. You can help me in the warehouse and learn while you labor."

I wondered what it would be like to see Big Eli working in a warehouse. All he had done was hunt and trap and fish. That wasn't easy, but it wasn't like working in a tobacco warehouse,

either. Uncle Zack would have thought our way of making a living was harder than buying and selling the weed.

"When will you be ready to start?" Uncle Zack asked.

"In a day or so," said Big Eli, and Uncle Zack waited a spell before he said anything.

"She's not the marrying kind, Elias," said Uncle Zack.

"Or the kind to marry," said Aunt Soph.

"If I can find her, I'll wed her," said Big Eli, and Aunt Soph and Uncle Zack didn't say anything more about Hannah. In a short spell Big Eli came to bed and I dropped off to sleep.

The next morning he was gone when I got up for breakfast and Faro was gone, too, but the rifle and the Gabriel Horn had been left behind. I knew he wasn't hunting. He was looking for Hannah.

After breakfast I walked up to the tavern to watch some carpenters laying on a new roof. Some boys started poking fun at my long hair and I almost had a fight with one of them, but when I pulled out my skinning knife and started playing mumblety-peg they let me alone. That afternoon I walked in the woods, which were deep and dark, and I found foot trails made by the Chickasaws. Wild turkeys called from the thickets and once, in the distance, a catamount screamed like a woman in pain.

Big Eli got home as Aunt Soph was putting supper on the table and I could tell by his face that he hadn't learned anything about Hannah or where she went.

Uncle Zack or Aunt Soph didn't mention her. Uncle Zack mumbled the blessing when we sat down to eat, and aside from that nothing worth the telling was said during the meal. When Big Eli finished eating he leaned back in his chair and looked at me for a long time like he was thinking of things he didn't want to say. Finally he turned to Uncle Zack.

"When do I start in the warehouse?" he asked.

"Tomorrow's as good a time as any," said Uncle Zack.

## CHAPTER 3

THE buying season hadn't started, for most of the crop was in the fields, but Uncle Zack was getting ready for it. Stays and hoops for the hogsheads had to be shipped in by pole barge from Nashville and hauled by wagon from the river to Humility. They had to be put together in the warehouse and Uncle Zack hired two men to help out. The first day I watched the work go on in the warehouse. There were a lot of benches in the place and I wondered what they were for, but I didn't ask Uncle Zack for he was busy. It was after dark when he paid off the two hired men and then we went back to the house for supper.

We didn't go in the front door, but went to the kitchen to wash up before we ate. When we got inside, I saw that Aunt Soph had closed the door between the kitchen and the big room and, when she saw me looking at it, she put her fingers to her lips and whispered, "Don't go in there. Surprise!"

Big Eli looked puzzled but Uncle Zack cackled and nudged Aunt Soph with his elbow. While Big Eli and Uncle Zack washed up, I counted the chairs at the table and there were five of them and five plates had been set, too.

Aunt Soph scrubbed my face and hands and took a comb out of her hair and ran it through mine, which hung down over my shoulders like Big Eli's. Uncle Zack shined his boots with a brush and so did Big Eli, though his didn't look as glossy as Uncle Zack's when he got through.

"Let me look you over," Aunt Soph said, and Uncle Zack lined me and Big Eli up beside him. "You'll do," she said, and went and opened the door between the kitchen and the big room.

"Come in, Miss Susie," she said.

A woman, medium tall and with hair as glossy black as a crow, appeared in the doorway. She was a young woman but older than Hannah, how much I couldn't guess. Her nose was thin at the

bridge like Uncle Zack's, and she was wearing the prettiest dress I had ever seen. She stopped and looked at us, standing as straight as a Cherokee queen. She had a Sunday smile on her face.

Aunt Soph said, "Miss Susie, this is Zack's brother, Elias. Miss Susie Spann." Big Eli bowed and told Miss Susie he was glad to know her.

"Miss Susie keeps house for her brother," Uncle Zack said, and I guessed she didn't have a man of her own. "He trades in niggers," Uncle Zack added.

Aunt Soph took Miss Susie's hand and led her into the kitchen. "They come from St. Louis," she said to Big Eli.

"Originally from New Orleans," Miss Susie said.

"We're from mountain country," Big Eli told her, and Miss Susie looked at me and smiled.

"The vittles will frostbite if you don't sit," Aunt Soph said.

Uncle Zack pulled back a chair for Miss Susie to sit in and motioned with his head for Big Eli to sit next to her. He put me in the chair beside Aunt Soph and he sat down at the head of the table as usual. While we ate, Uncle Zack did most of the talking and most of what he said was praising Aunt Soph's cooking.

"There's nothing like good vittles to make a man happy," he'd say and smile at Big Eli, and Aunt Soph would say, "But it takes a good man to provide the vittles," and she'd smile at Miss Susie.

After supper was over, Miss Susie offered to help Aunt Soph with the dishes, but Aunt Soph wouldn't hear to it, saying Miss Susie might get dishwater on her dress. Aunt Soph asked me to dry the dishes instead, and Uncle Zack and Big Eli and Miss Susie went into the big room. When we had finished, Aunt Soph and I went in, too, and Aunt Soph asked me if I wasn't sleepy, but I said I wasn't and sat down next to Big Eli.

Uncle Zack didn't read Scripture that night. He and Aunt Soph kept asking and saying things that Miss Susie had to answer.

She told how she had lived in New Orleans as a girl and then when her folks died she went to St. Louis with her brother, Jim.

They had moved to The Purchase when the Chickasaws moved out and settlers started moving in and taking over the new land. I got the feeling she didn't like The Purchase or the folks in it.

Then I heard Faro's deep bay about a mile away. I could tell by the pitch he'd struck a hot scent and I wished Big Eli and I were out on a ridge where we could hear him better. Big Eli got up from his chair and reached for the Gabriel Horn which was on the mantel. Then he opened the door. I knew what he was going to do and I looked at Miss Susie who was watching him and wondering.

Big Eli didn't blow right off, and I knew he was calculating the wind before he did and maybe giving Miss Susie plenty of time to get her ears set to hear him. Then he lifted the Gabriel Horn to his lips and the sound poured out like blue smoke from a gun muzzle, sharp as flint at first and then spreading out full and mellow to die far away on the light wind. It was as pretty a blow as I'd ever heard Big Eli do and I heard Faro skip a bay and I knew he'd caught it. It must have come unexpected to Miss Susie for she sat up straight with a jerk and looked from Uncle Zack to Aunt Soph, but she didn't say anything.

Big Eli shut the door and hung the Gabriel Horn on a peg next to the rifle and he looked a little disappointed that nobody mentioned the Gabriel Horn or Faro's hearing it.

When he sat down Aunt Soph told me I should be in bed. I didn't want to shuck my riffin' with Miss Susie there, so I didn't budge from my chair.

In a spell Miss Susie said she'd have to go and Uncle Zack said, "Elias will take you home," and he cackled, "He'll want to know which house it is, so's he can find it again."

Aunt Soph frowned at him and said, "That's enough, Zachariah," and Miss Susie made like she hadn't heard a word of it.

While she was putting on her cape, Big Eli was standing there looking at her and she wasn't letting him miss anything for she turned slowly from Aunt Soph to Uncle Zack, telling them what

a nice time she had and letting the lamplight shine full on her. Big Eli held out his arm and she took it and smiled up at him. He turned his head to see if I was watching and when he saw me grin, he reddened and said, "Better turn in, Little Eli."

They left and I began to get ready for bed. Aunt Soph and Uncle Zack seemed mighty pleased about everything.

"She'd make him a good woman," said Uncle Zack.

Aunt Soph nodded her head. "She's quality," she said.

I knew they were trying to make a match of their own whit-  
tling. I was asleep when Big Eli got home.

## CHAPTER 4

A FEW DAYS later I heard Big Eli ask the two men Uncle Zack had hired to help at the warehouse if they knew anybody by the name of Bolen, Adam Bolen. They said they didn't. I guess Big Eli thought if he could find him he could find Hannah. For two Sundays running he borrowed one of Uncle Zack's horses and rode off without saying where he was going, but I knew he was still looking for her.

Aunt Soph and Uncle Zack didn't like it because he missed Sunday-morning meeting which was held in Uncle Zack's warehouse. The first Sunday I learned that the benches I had seen were for folks to sit on when they came to hear Uncle Zack read Scripture and preach. He wasn't a regular preacher, but they were scarce in The Purchase and until a meetinghouse could be built the folks in Humility were willing to put up with him. After Big Eli had missed out on the second Sunday, Miss Susie and her brother, Jim, came over to Uncle Zack's house one night.

She called him "brother" and he called her "sister." I had seen him around the tavern a couple of times but I didn't know he was her brother. I thought he was a gambler. He wore a long black coat with tails, a fancy vest with a gold watch chain across the front, and he sniffed snuff from his thumbnail.

"Sister Susie tells me you're not a pious man," he said to Big Eli. Big Eli looked at Miss Susie. "What makes you think I'm not?" he asked her.

"You don't go to meeting," she said.

Big Eli looked into the fireplace and didn't answer.

"A father should set a good example for his son," said Aunt Soph.

"He tells me Scriptures," I said. Big Eli looked at me and smiled like he was glad I took his side.

I guess he wanted to switch the subject for he asked Miss Susie's brother, "I hear you deal in blacks?"

Miss Susie's brother looked at him with a cocked, watery eye. "Yes," he said, "now and then."

"Business hasn't been what Jim expected," said Miss Susie.

Brother Jim shook his head. "Folks came in here with an axe and a hoe, and that's about all," he said. "Of course, there're a few who can afford to keep blacks and do, and some who can afford them and don't." He looked at Uncle Zack. "Zack Wakefield could use a couple with the way his business is growing," he added.

Uncle Zack fanned the toes of his boots like he was looking at himself in their shine. "I was thinking about buying a black until Elias got here," he said. "Now I won't need one for a spell."

Big Eli was watching him as he said it. "You've come a far piece, Zack," he said.

Uncle Zack looked at him and asked, "In what way?"

"Recollect that dog you had when you and Soph got wed?" Big Eli asked him, and Uncle Zack nodded and said, "Yes?"

"Mighty good dog," Big Eli said. "Never ate his kill. Always brought it home to show how smart he was. If it was a rabbit you'd skin it and give him the hide and the guts. Then you and Soph would eat the meat."

I heard Aunt Soph start to cluck.

"Now you're talking about buying a black," said Big Eli. "It's a far piece you've come."

Big Eli didn't believe in owning blacks or in trading in them. He thought it was a sin.

Aunt Soph went to the kitchen and Miss Susie followed her. Soon they came back with cake and pickles and passed them around. After we ate, Miss Susie and her brother went home, but I could see that Uncle Zack and Aunt Soph were vexed at Big Eli for what he had said.

The next Sunday Big Eli went to meeting. Uncle Zack stood at the door of the warehouse and shook hands with everybody like he hadn't seen them in a long time, though he saw most of them every day.

Uncle Zack wasn't much of a preacher. He kept shouting until he ran out of words and then he'd read a passage of Scripture. That would start him off on another shouting spree and he'd yell and wave his arms like he was trying to scare Beelzebub out of the warehouse.

That wasn't the way I had learned the Scriptures from Big Eli. He never read Scriptures. He knew them by heart and at night he'd tell them to me and I'd get so excited I sometimes couldn't go to sleep when I slid under the bear hide. In my mind's eye I'd see Little David brace himself in his bare feet and let fly the rock with his slingshot and I could hear the rattle of iron as Old Goliath came tumbling down in his armor. I liked the Scripture about Little David.

And there was another Scripture about old King Pharaoh's daughter finding Little Moses. I never got tired listening to it for Big Eli would tell it right up to the place where she took Little Moses home in a basket and then Big Eli would ask me, "Do you know what she did?" and I'd say, "What did she do?" though I knew all the time what she did. Then Big Eli would say, "She yelled into the palace and said, 'Paw, come lookie what I found down yonder in that swamp!'" Then we'd both laugh. Uncle Zack didn't read Scripture like that.

One night I told the story of Moses to Miss Susie, but she didn't



laugh when I finished, but I did. "You shouldn't laugh at Scripture," she said. "That is blasphemy." I still don't know what she thought was wrong with it.

That was the same night she asked Big Eli to say blessing at table. Big Eli bent his face over his plate and shut his eyes, then began.

"God bless our vittles,

"God bless our shack,

"God bless Aunt Soph and Uncle Zack. Amen."

I knew he made up every word of it and I laughed. There was a twinkle in his eye when he looked up from his plate, but Miss Susie didn't smile. Her face just got red.

Aunt Soph looked at Big Eli and then at me and said, "Well!"

Uncle Zack tucked his napkin under his collar and said, "Pass the vittles."

## CHAPTER 5

THE DAYS were still warm but sundown brought a chill to the air. One night, right after supper, Big Eli took the Gabriel Horn off the peg and said to me, "Let's have a run tonight."

He meant that Faro would do the running while he and I sat by a blaze on some ridge and listened to Faro bay after a fox. The moon was out and we headed into the hills overlooking the Tennessee. Wood smoke drifted like a light fog on the night air. Some of it came from timber that had been cut to make new ground but most of it came from tobacco barns where the new-cut crop was being fire-cured and it sweetened the air. Faro ran ahead of us, crashing this way and that through the thickets. A rabbit jumped up in front of him but he paid it no heed for Big Eli had taught him that only foxes were to be chased at night.

Big Eli and I walked along together saying nothing, but I knew he was thinking the same things I was. It was the first time since we got to The Purchase that the three of us, counting Faro, had been

alone together. We were enjoying it and there was no sense in talking about it.

Now and then Faro would yip, sometimes close and sometimes far away, and Big Eli would call out "Hock!" to let him know we were still with him. We had been walking about an hour when we saw from the top of the ridge a ribbon of silver winding through the valley below us. It was the Tennessee with the light of the moon shining on it. Big Eli halted and we stood there looking down on it for a long time, not saying a word. A deep bay from Faro broke the silence and I knew he had cut the scent of a fox about a mile away.

"Let's build a blaze," said Big Eli, and both of us began gathering dry sticks and rotten limbs from the scrub timber that covered the ridge. By the time we had the fire started another voice joined Faro's in the chase. It was high-pitched and excited.

"A bitch," said Big Eli when he heard it.

It wasn't long before another dog joined in with a medium pitch and the three of them faded into the far distance. I heard something moving through the brush and dry leaves about a hundred yards away and recognized it as footsteps. A man wearing jeans gummy with tobacco came into the rim of firelight. He and Big Eli howdied.

"Is that bigmouthed dog yours?" he asked, meaning the deep-pitched bay of Faro.

Big Eli said it was.

"Good dog," said the man. "That's my pup that joined in first."

"Sit down," said Big Eli, and the man hunkered to his haunches, facing the fire, his elbows on his knees and his hands hanging limp in front of him.

"My name's Morgan," he said.

"Wakefield's mine," said Big Eli.

"I figgered," he said, looking at Big Eli's long hair and mine. "I hear you're from mountain country."

Big Eli said we were. Two other dogs had joined in to make a

pack and it was running through a draw, the bays strong and paced for good running.

Another man appeared in the span of light.

"My brother Anse," said Morgan. "Anse, this is Zack Wakefield's brother."

Big Eli and Anse Morgan nodded, then Anse looked at me. "Howdy, son," he said, and sat down by his brother. "Where's Tully and Bob?"

"They'll jine any time now," his brother said. "Their dogs are running."

Tully Morgan showed up with a jug of cider swung over his shoulder and a short time later Bob Morgan came in. He was younger than his brothers and was leading a big red hound that was heavy enough but its nose was a little too short and he held his tail out straight like a bird dog. Bob slipped the noose from the hound's neck and called, "Hock!" and the dog bounded into the bush in the direction of the running pack, but somehow he didn't seem to have his heart in it.

Bob told Big Eli that he had gone to Tennessee to buy the dog only the day before, and he wasn't shy about the red dog's breed. This started everybody off on tales about great dogs and great hunts and even Big Eli, who was mighty shy with strangers, told about some of the dogs he had owned and known about.

Talk stopped only when the pack came near and then each of the brothers would try to pick out his own hound by the bay. Other hounds from other farms had joined in until there must have been more than a dozen in the race. Young Bob was certain that his red dog had taken the lead and was holding it. His brothers or Big Eli didn't dispute him.

The jug was passed again and dog talk went on. Tully Morgan got up and stretched his legs. Then he walked to the far edge of the firelight. Suddenly he stopped short and looked under a bush.

"Hey, Bob!" he called. "Come here!"

Bob got up and walked over to where Tully was standing, looking into the bush. I saw Bob look into the bush, too.

"I'll be damned!" Bob yelled and swung his booted foot with all his might. There was a yelp of pain and the red dog bounded into the light. Bob scrambled for a stick and threw it as the dog disappeared yelping into the dark.

The Morgan brothers screamed and yelled and slapped each other on the back, and Big Eli and I laughed, too. Bob came back to the fire, picked up the cider jug and drained it.

"That no-good red hound," he said, shaking his head. "While I'm bragging on him, he was asleep under that damned bush!"

I felt sorry for him, as funny as it was.

About that time the pack made the kill a half mile below us. Big Eli put the Gabriel Horn to his lips and blew Faro in. The Morgan brothers looked at each other and nodded their heads and Tully Morgan said, "Mighty pretty music, Wakefield." They waited until Faro came bounding in, his long red tongue hanging out. Big Eli stanced him so they could see what a good dog he was, and the brothers went over him inch by inch.

"He's all of his bay," said Anse Morgan. "I'd admire a litter out of my bitch by him."

Big Eli said we'd better be going and the Morgans asked us to come back again and we said we would and then Big Eli and I headed toward Humility.

At breakfast we told Aunt Soph and Uncle Zack where we had been and who we had met.

"They're good farmers," said Uncle Zack, "but keep friends with them. You never want them against you."

"I figgered," said Big Eli.

"They stick as close as cottonseed," said Uncle Zack, "and I reckon the only one who hasn't killed a man in his day is young Bob."

"I figgered," said Big Eli.



## CHAPTER 6

IN MID-JULY Aunt Soph had heard a cricket in the kitchen wood box. "Sixty days and we'll have frost," she had said to me.

In the days that passed, I forgot about it. The leaves began turning and the hills looked like a crazy quilt of color. Swarms of canaries, yellow and tinged with green, began gathering and parakeets chattered in the hazel thickets before winging south.

One morning, right after I had seen two V's of geese flying a mile high over Humility, I went into the back yard to split kindling for the kitchen and there was frost on the axe. I rushed back into the house to tell Aunt Soph she was right about that cricket.

Uncle Zack was standing in front of the kitchen fireplace warming his rear and working up an appetite for a skillet of squirrels Big Eli had shot at daybreak.

"Two years ago this time the passengers came," he said.

"What's that?" I asked him.

"Pigeons," he said. "Wild pigeons."

With all the other birds heading south for the winter, I wondered why he bothered to mention pigeons. By the time we ate breakfast I had forgotten all about what he had said.

That afternoon I took Faro and went into the woods to pick hazelnuts and look for muscadines. It was getting close to sundown when I heard it, and I wouldn't have paid much attention except that Faro cocked his head and listened, then bristled and began to whine like he was afraid. It sounded like a storm coming in fast from the north. We broke and ran for Humility and as we raced around the warehouse I saw people running out of houses and looking up at the sky to the north. Uncle Zack, a hammer in his hand, came running out of the warehouse with Big Eli right behind him.

"A hurricane," I yelled, because the sky had darkened to the

northwest, and the roar was getting louder by the second.

Uncle Zack dropped his hammer in the dust and pointed.

"It's the passengers!" he shouted to make himself heard.

Faro started to howl, and then I saw them coming in.

"There's millions of them!" shouted Uncle Zack.

I didn't know how much a million tallied, but I guessed he was right for I didn't believe there were so many birds in all the world, including blue jays and crows. They came in low clouds and swarmed around the village and then they'd see the people standing in the road and they would swoop high again and swirl around like a cyclone twister. The sky got black as night. After a while they began swooping into the timber at the west end of the village and I heard limbs cracking under their weight. Nobody tried to talk because of the noise they made, and it didn't quiet down until long after real dark set in. Even then, I could hear them passing over and there were no stars in the sky.



There wasn't a supper cooked in the village that night; men and women and children and dogs started coming into Humility long before the roar of the passengers had stopped. They came on foot, on mule and horseback, in wagons and rigs. Some brought scatter-guns, some had rifles, and others cut long poles after they got there. Bonfires were built along the road and guns began booming all through the woods and the men with the long poles beat the lower limbs of the trees. The women and children ran about with lanterns, picking up dead pigeons and stuffing them in tow sacks or throwing them in wagon beds, for the ground was littered with them. Uncle Zack didn't kill any himself, but he and Aunt Soph picked them up by the armful. Big Eli and I just watched, and then I got a look at his face and it was hard to tell whether he was scared or killing mad.

He was watching a man about the size of himself who carried a twin-barreled muzzle-loader and a whisky jug. The man would stand off and fire both barrels into the trees and watch birds rain down from the limbs, then he'd reload and take a swig from the jug and start over again. Not once did he pick up his kill, and he kept at it for an hour. After a while he came to the bonfire where we were standing and began to swab his gun with a ramrod. Sweat was running down his face like he had just climbed out of a creek. He looked at us with a big grin.

"Where's your gun, Mister?" he yelled at Big Eli, and reached for his powder horn which was a long one with a silver tip.

Big Eli didn't answer him. He just walked over, took hold of the powder horn like he was admiring how pretty it was.

The man must have thought that was what Big Eli was doing for he didn't object, and then I saw Big Eli tip the horn and the powder poured out on the ground. The man was so surprised at what he saw that he tried, but couldn't, talk.

"You've done enough shooting for tonight," Big Eli said, and handed the horn to him. Then he came back to me, took my hand and we started toward Uncle Zack's house.



We had just got inside and lit a candle when Uncle Zack and Aunt Soph came in with two tow sacks filled with pigeons. I could see they were upset about something.

"It's a good thing you emptied that powder horn complete," said Uncle Zack to Big Eli.

"Why?" asked Big Eli.

"That's Stan Bodine," Uncle Zack said. "He's a bad man to cross. He'd have shot you if you'd have left him the powder to do it."

"He's a whisky rebel from Pennsylvania," said Aunt Soph.

Big Eli didn't seem interested. He began to shuck his boots and get ready for bed.

## CHAPTER 7

**B**IG ELI had worked out about half of what he owed to Uncle Zack and figgered he could pay off the other half when tobacco came in season and Uncle Zack started buying. We didn't have any cash in hand, though, and we both needed things like new boots for me and a hat and jeans for Big Eli. The Morgan brothers were giving a dance on Saturday night, but I guessed Big Eli wasn't going because he didn't have riggin' fit to wear.

I was sitting in the open door whittling sticks when I heard a horse coming up the road and then I heard a man's voice say "Whoa!" in front of our house. I looked up to see who it was and my heart skipped a beat.

"It's him," I said. "Stan Bodine!"

Uncle Zack jumped out of his chair like he had sat on a hornet. "He's here for trouble, Elias!" he said to Big Eli.

Bodine didn't waste any time getting to what he came for. "I understand you paid indenture for a bound girl named Hannah Bolen," he said to Uncle Zack.

I heard Aunt Soph cluck. Uncle Zack cleared his throat and said, "Yes, I did, Bodine." Then he named the amount.

Bodine drew out a long purse made out of a doe's tail and which had a silver snap on it.

"I want to pay it off," he said. Uncle Zack looked at Big Eli who was looking at Bodine. Bodine was counting out money, some silver and some paper.

Uncle Zack wrote out a receipt and handed it to him. As Bodine started to leave Big Eli asked, "Are you her kin?"

There was a grin on Bodine's lips. "No, I'm not her kin," he said. "I'm her husband."

He stood looking at Big Eli like he was waiting to tell more if anybody asked him, but Big Eli didn't say anything and Bodine left.

When we heard the horse trot up the road, Uncle Zack said to Big Eli, "Elias, I guess I owe you money."

Big Eli nodded. "You can pay me now," he said.

Uncle Zack went to his secretary desk and figured on paper for a few seconds or so. After he tallied up how much of the indenture Big Eli had worked out, he counted it out in cash and handed it to him.

"We're square, Zack," said Big Eli and pocketed it. "I'd like the loan of a mule for a couple of days."

Uncle Zack nodded his head. "Catch up the one you want any time you want it," he said.

Big Eli got his hat and on his way out he let his hand fall on my shoulder. "Take care of Aunt Soph and Uncle Zack," he said, and went to the stables. A few minutes later I watched him jog up the road.

Two days passed and Big Eli didn't come home and by Saturday noon I guessed he had forgotten all about the dance at the Morgans'. Then along about the middle of the afternoon I saw a long-eared mule coming down the road and Big Eli was astride him. I could see there was a lot of truck tied to the saddle. They were wrapped in brown paper and smelled like a store.

"What's in them?" I asked him.

"A surprise," he said with a big grin on his face.

As we came to the door, Aunt Soph looked at him and asked, "Who trimmed your hair?"

I hadn't noticed it until then, but she was right. It didn't look any shorter but it was smooth around the sides and somebody had used a razor around his ears. And then I smelled honeysuckle. Aunt Soph must have got a whiff of it, too. She sniffed and asked, "Elias, have you been drinking?"

Big Eli bent down and kissed her smack on the mouth, giving her a chance to smell his breath.

"He's acting like it," said Uncle Zack.

"Taint so," Aunt Soph laughed. "It's only on his hair and not on his breath."

Big Eli laughed out loud and we all followed him into the house. He tossed his hat on the hook and then he handed me a bundle and said, "Open it." It was a pair of boots, glossy black with rawhide straps to lift them by. I kicked off the ones I was wearing and slipped my feet into the new ones and the air seemed full of the smell of new leather. I couldn't say anything because I didn't know what to say.

"How much they cost you, Elias?" Uncle Zack asked.

Big Eli didn't answer him. He picked up another bundle and gave it to Aunt Soph and she asked, "For me?" like she never had a present before. Big Eli clipped the cord, for her hands were shaking like they had the palsy. She ripped the paper away.

"A new dress!" she said, and held it up for us to see. "Made of bombazine, too!"

"Made in New Orleans," said Big Eli.

Uncle Zack shook his head and squinched his lips. "A fool and his money's soon parted," he said.

Aunt Soph hugged and kissed Big Eli. "Pay no heed to what he says," she said, and Big Eli laughed and handed another package to Uncle Zack.

"Just in case you get snake-bit, Zack," he said with a grin.

Uncle Zack tore off the wrapper and held out a demijohn that had a net of straw around it.

"French brandy," he said, and smacked his lips.

Aunt Soph grabbed my hand and also Uncle Zack's and the three of us danced a ring around Big Eli and laughed and when we quit, he said, "I've got to wash off. I smell of mule."

Aunt Soph hurried into the kitchen to get out the wooden washtub and I heard her ladling hot water from a pot on the coals. Big Eli followed her and carried two bundles he hadn't opened. Then he shut the door, leaving Uncle Zack and me in the big room.

In a few minutes Aunt Soph came out and she was all smiles. She picked up her new dress and dashed out the front door saying, "I've got to show it to Miss Susie." Soon I could hear Big Eli splashing around in the tub but I was so excited about my new boots I forgot all about him until Aunt Soph came back from Miss Susie's house. "Is he still in there?" she asked.

Just then the door opened and Big Eli stepped through, only I wasn't certain it was him. He was in new riggin' from Wellington boots to a broad-brimmed beaver like Pennsylvania keelboat-ers wore. His jeans had stripes in them and covered the tops of his boots to sag a little at the bottom. But the coat was the biggest surprise of all. It was made of black cloth, with black buttons on the sides, and it puckered like a wasp at the waist. His long yellow hair rolled over the collar like butter off a hot ear of corn.

I thought Aunt Soph was going to kiss him. Uncle Zack looked him over and said, "All dressed up and no place to go."

"How about it, Sophia?" Big Eli asked.

"Zack's wrong," she said, then turned to Uncle Zack. "He's carrying Miss Susie to the Morgan dance tonight."

Then I knew why Big Eli had shut the door when he and Aunt Soph went into the kitchen and why she had hustled over to see Miss Susie.

Uncle Zack began rubbing his hands together like a raccoon washing beetles. "Then I'd wager you'd hanker the loan of my rig and team," he said to Big Eli.

"I'd admire to, Zack," Big Eli said.

UNCLE ZACK wouldn't let Big Eli hitch the team because he would smell of horses if he did. We caught out the chestnut filly and the roan gelding with a blaze face and then we groomed them until they were as glossy as my new boots. After that we got the harness and rubbed it clean with bear grease, and then hitched up the team. The horses were never worked and in the chill fall air their spirits tickled them like a burr under their cruppers.

They were stepping high when I opened the lot gate and the rig rolled into the road with Big Eli handling the reins. It was starting to get dark and candle lights were shining through the windows in the village. Doors began to open and neighbors watched as Big Eli made a wide turn and reined in at Miss Susie's.



She must have been waiting for him for she came out with her brother. Big Eli touched the brim of his new beaver and stepped out of the rig. I saw him histe her into the seat and then climb in beside her.

Aunt Soph called from the doorway to Uncle Zack and me.

"Don't strain your eyes," she said.

The rig rolled by and Miss Susie waved a handkerchief at Aunt Soph and Aunt Soph waved at Miss Susie. It was too dark to see what Miss Susie looked like in her dancing finery, but in my mind's eye it wasn't her sitting up there with Big Eli and it wasn't Big Eli sitting there with her. It was Hannah Bolen and me and she smelled as sweet as a posy and I was wearing a long black coat and a keelboater's beaver.

We went inside. A fire was blazing in the fireplace and I took off my new boots and set them where the light could flicker on them. Aunt Soph got out her new dress that Big Eli had brought to her and began sewing lace around the neck so it wouldn't look so low cut when she wore it. Uncle Zack uncorked his brandy and sucked a mouthful, then smacked his lips and put the demi-john back on the shelf in the corner. Next he read Scripture for a while and then I climbed into bed and went to sleep. I don't know when or why I woke up again but Aunt Soph and Uncle Zack were still sitting by the fire and they were talking low so as not to wake me.

"She's a lady and would make a good mother for the boy," Aunt Soph was saying.

Uncle Zack agreed and then he asked, "Do you reckon she's warming to him, Sophia?"

"It's too early to tell with a woman like her," said Aunt Soph. "She's not like the riffraff he's trucked with before."

"Seems to me she's not clabbered to him the way I fancied she would," Uncle Zack said.

"You talked him up so much before he got here, maybe the telling was sweeter than the smelling," said Aunt Soph.

"I know," said Uncle Zack. "You wouldn't have said anything about him at all and when he got here Miss Susie would have swooned. I know. I know."

They were silent for a while, and then Uncle Zack yawned. "Bedtime, Sophia," he said and began banking the coals.

I dropped off to sleep but woke up again when Big Eli climbed into bed. I made like I was asleep for I knew he was tired from dancing most of the night, but I wouldn't have been able to sleep much for he kept rolling and tossing. That wasn't like Big Eli. He usually slept as dead as a poled ox. I got up at daybreak and chunked the fire in the kitchen to have it ready for Aunt Soph when she started breakfast.

## CHAPTER 8

IT RAINED off and on for a week, sometimes driving hard and then slackening off to a cold drizzle.

"They'll start stripping now," Uncle Zack said when it began, meaning that the rain would bring the tobacco leaves in order, making them soft as doeskin, and the growers would begin stripping them from the stalks and tying them into hands ready for delivery.

Uncle Zack and Big Eli spent most of the time at the warehouse getting things in shape for the farmers when they came. The road through the village turned into a river of mud, churned up by the teams that passed. I put away my new boots that Big Eli had bought for me and put on the old ones.

One evening, after the rain had stopped, Uncle Zack said as we sat down to supper, "The wagons will start rolling tonight." Then he asked Aunt Soph, "Has Conse Foster been around?"

Aunt Soph said that she hadn't seen him and about that time there was a knock at the front door and she went to answer it.

"Here he is now," she called to Uncle Zack, and then I heard her say, "Come in, Sheriff."

Uncle Zack got up and shook hands with him and then introduced Big Eli.

"Is Zack making a tobacco man out of you?" the Sheriff asked Big Eli.

"He's aiming to," Big Eli said.

"He's learning fast," Uncle Zack said, shaking his head like he was proud of what he had taught Big Eli.

Aunt Soph spread a plate in front of the Sheriff and he set to. When he finished eating he wiped his mouth on a napkin and leaned back in his chair.

"Court's in term," he said to Uncle Zack, "and I won't be able to help you out."

Uncle Zack and Aunt Soph looked upset about that and Uncle Zack said, "Sheriff, there's always trouble when deliveries start."

Sheriff Foster said he knew it. "I figgered to deputize somebody to keep order," he said and looked at Big Eli. "As long as your brother is learning the tobacco business, it might as well be him."

"He could do it," Uncle Zack said; and then asked, "How about it, Elias?"

"I don't hanker," said Big Eli.

Sheriff Foster thought for a spell.

"If it wasn't for Zack there wouldn't be no village of Humility," he said. "That warehouse of his *is* Humility. Burn it down or take it away and folks would move away. It's his responsibility to keep order in a place he made."

Uncle Zack didn't say anything about that and the Sheriff went on telling Big Eli that it wouldn't be a regular job, but only while deliveries were being made.

"You'd oblige me to take it," he said.

"On one condition," said Big Eli.

"What's that?" said the Sheriff.

"I won't tote a gun," said Big Eli, and I knew the Sheriff would have to take it or leave it.



"That's up to you," said the Sheriff, "but there are low-down critters hereabouts. I'd advise you to tote one."

Big Eli shook his head. "No gun," he said.

The Sheriff reached into his pocket and brought out a bright badge and tossed it across the table to Big Eli.

"Then make certain you keep this in sight," he said, and got to his feet. "Stand up, Elias," he said and raised his right hand.

Big Eli got up and raised his right hand and the Sheriff recited the oath and Big Eli said, "I do."

"If anything happens you can't handle," said the Sheriff, "I can manage to come over from Wadesboro." He thanked Aunt Soph for his supper, shook hands around and left.

It was still pitch-dark when we got up next morning to go meet the wagons. I could see the glare of a bonfire flickering on the panes of the bay window and when I looked out I could see men standing around a blaze down near the warehouse, warming their hands. Before leaving, Uncle Zack went to the fireplace and removed two bricks from the chimney. He brought out a bag of silver and the biggest roll of paper money I had ever seen.

Two men Uncle Zack had hired to help unload were waiting at the warehouse. We opened the doors and then the unloading and weighing started. Wagons drove up and stopped in front of the big double doors and the hired men took over, doing the unloading and handling the leaf while the farmer stood by the scales and tallied the weight with Uncle Zack. Then Uncle Zack paid up and the farmer drove off.

Most of them drove to the store to settle accounts that had been carried for months. Some hung around the bonfires most of the day and told stories and drank grog before going home.

When the sun came up, between 20 and 30 wagons were strung out along the road past the last house in the village. They were covered with blankets and quilts of many colors, tied down at the corners to keep them from blowing off and to keep the leaf from drying out in the wind.

The loaded wagons had sunk into the muddy road almost to the hubs and sometimes the mules or horses had trouble in getting a load moving again once it had stopped. They plunged and sometimes fell and had to be helped to their feet by the men.

There were several yokes of oxen hitched to wagons and they never seemed to have any trouble getting their loads moving. They only lowered their shaggy heads and laid against the yoke while the drivers yelled oaths and cracked bullwhips that sounded like pistol shots in the winter air. The wagons would creak and then slowly move while the mud made sucking sounds around the wheels and the legs of the oxen. Nobody bothered to help the oxen because they didn't need it. But the men who stood around would yell advice to the bullwhackers and some of it was mighty rough, but not as rough as the oaths the bullwhackers yelled at the oxen.

Mule skimmers liked to tell stories about bullwhackers and bullwhackers liked to tell stories about mule skimmers and I guess they tried to outdo each other.

I spent most of my time around the bonfires watching the mule skimmers and bullwhackers play games to while away the time until their wagons were unloaded.

They had one game called "Howdy Stranger." Two men would stand sidewise and toe to toe, with their feet wide apart so they wouldn't get thrown off balance when the game started. Each man would put his left hand on his hip and it had to stay there during the game or the man who lifted his left hand would be called the loser. They would say "Howdy Stranger" and clasp hands and the game was on. Each one would try to crush the other's hand until he quit. They would sway back and forth and grunt and groan with pain until the sweat would roll down their faces, and now and then I'd hear a bone crack and the hurt one would quit.

Another game was called "Rapjack" and it was played mostly by bullwhackers because they knew how to cut the wings off a

horsefly with their bullwhips, which were 15 to 20 feet long. Two of them would square off about 15 feet apart and one would usually say, "No eyes," and the other would repeat, "No eyes," which meant it wouldn't be fair to aim at eyes during the game. Then they'd start lashing out with their whips, first picking off buttons which would go flying through the air. Then they would start ripping jeans. The whips would snap and crack like rifleshots and a knife couldn't cut cloth any keener. Now and then a bullwhacker would misjudge his aim and draw blood and the crowd would yell. The man whose blood had been drawn would then set out to draw some for himself, and pretty soon Big Eli would have to come from the warehouse and stop it.

It was the day after Big Eli stopped a whip fight that he had trouble with Stan Bodine. Bodine had come to Humility every day since deliveries started. Big Eli and I saw him drive up in a fancy rig with a spatter board and a high seat. He had a horsehair blanket covering something else in the bed of the hack.

He didn't hitch near the warehouse but tied up his horse near the tavern. Men around the bonfires grinned when they saw him and joked him when he joined them. Bodine didn't grow the weed, like the rest of them — he ran a still in his barn.

"Got anything beside burning chunks to keep a body warm, Stan?" a farmer asked.

"For a man who can pay for it, I have," he said.

"I might freeze before Zack Wakefield unloads my crop and pays up," said the farmer and waved a hand at the line of wagons waiting to be unloaded.

"I reckon your credit's good until then," Bodine said.

He started toward his rig and the farmer followed him. Soon the farmer came back with a jug under his coat. He uncorked it, flipped it over his wrist and drank, then made a wry face and spit into the fire. Blue flame bounced up and flickered for more than a minute.

"Burns better than chunks," he said, and everybody laughed.

Two more farmers went away with Bodine in the afternoon and came back with jugs, and Bodine stood around the fire and joked with the men and collected the money he had been promised in the morning.

One afternoon a whip fight started and Big Eli came from the warehouse to stop it when it got bloody. Bodine saw him and the fun that had been in his face seemed to drain into his boots and his fat lips sagged into a snarl.

"I'll be damned," he said. "Look who's toting a badge on his chest."

When the two whip fighters saw Big Eli they quit lashing at each other and put away their whips. Big Eli came up to the bonfire like he had just dropped by to talk. He looked at two jugs on the ground and then at Stan Bodine who looked him back square in the eye. Big Eli turned and went back to the warehouse.

The next day Bodine came back with another load of jugs and Big Eli and I were standing in the door of the warehouse when we saw his rig pull up at the tavern. He wasn't alone this time. Hannah was in the seat beside him, wrapped in a fancy horsehair blanket. Bodine climbed down out of the seat and helped her out and they went in the tavern together.

"It's her," I said and looked at Big Eli.

"I see," he said and went back to work.

That afternoon I was standing around a bonfire, talking to Bob Morgan, when a boy about my age joined up with us and warmed his hands. A whipstock was in his back pocket with the rawhide lash coiled loose around it, and I knew he had made it himself. It was like the whips the bullwhackers used only it was about four feet long instead of twenty. I saw him looking at my long hair, as interested as I was in his whip. Neither of us said anything but stood there looking at each other.

I was wondering if I had anything he would swap for the whip in his pocket when I heard Stan Bodine, who was standing next to him, say, "He just looks like a girl, so don't try to kiss him."

The men laughed and the boy pinked a little through his tan. Stan Bodine grinned and squinted his eyes like a pig wading through a briar patch. "Maybe he is a girl," he said to the boy. "Why don't you take down his pants and see?"

The boy grinned but he shifted his eyes to the crowd and away from me like he wished somebody would start talking about mules or something else, but Bodine wouldn't let it be. He looked at me and said, "You ain't going to let him take your pants down, are you?" I didn't answer him, so he said to the boy, "He dares you to try it."

I looked at Bob Morgan and saw he was getting mad.

"Let the boys alone, Bodine," he said. Bob had walked around the fire and I started with him but, as I did, Bodine gave the boy a push which he wasn't looking for and he stumbled against me and fell to his knees. Just then a man pushed through the crowd. He saw the boy on his knees beside me and his lips bleached white. The boy saw him and I knew he was scared as he got up from the ground and backed away from me.

"Whip him, Son," the man said, "or I'll hide you!"

The boy reached for the whip in his back pocket and before I could dodge I felt it cut across my face. I lunged at him so he couldn't hit me again, but he was strong and he broke away. Blood started running down my face and over my eyes. I grabbed a stick off the ground and swung at him and I heard him yell. Then I saw that the stick was ablaze. I had pulled it out of the fire. The whip cut me again, this time across the back, and I heard my jerkin split like it had been slashed with a knife, and again I swung the burning stick and the charred end broke over his head.

I heard him crying and I began to cry, too, and all the time I could hear Stan Bodine egging us on, but always backing the one who seemed to be beating the other. Then things got quiet all of a sudden and I felt a hand on my shoulder and it shoved me back and knocked the stick out of my hand. I wiped a hand across my

eyes to clear away the blood and sweat and I saw the boy backing away, looking at somebody back of me like he was scared half to death.

"I didn't want to fight! I didn't want to fight!" he kept saying as he backed away.

I turned and saw Big Eli and the deputy sheriff's badge on his shirt shining bright in the afternoon sun.

The boy's father pushed in and said, "He knocked my boy down!" Big Eli didn't pay him any heed, but he asked the boy, "Did he start this?" and the boy shook his head and said, "They made us fight."

"Who made you fight?" asked Big Eli, and the boy looked around at the crowd as if he was blaming everybody instead of Stan Bodine. Big Eli looked at Bob Morgan but didn't say anything.

"Bodine egged 'em into it," Bob said.

Big Eli faced Bodine who was leaning against the wheel of a tobacco wagon.

"Bodine, I'm arresting you," said Big Eli.

"For what?" Bodine snarled and the grin was gone from his face.

"Disturbing the peace," said Big Eli and started toward him.

Stan Bodine shifted his eyes to the men about the fire but he didn't get a friendly look back and then I saw him reach out and snatch a bullwhip which was on the seat of the wagon he had been leaning against. He gave the stock a quick little flip and by the way the lash coiled in his fingers I knew he had used a bullwhip before and plenty. Right then I wished that Big Eli had taken the Sheriff's advice and toted a gun.

Bodine stepped free of the wagon and braced himself on spread legs as Big Eli came at him and then, like he was popping the head off a snake, he flipped the whip and I saw the bright badge on Big Eli's chest go flying through the air. Bodine laughed and so did some of the others. As the whip cracked again, Big Eli



covered his face with his left hand to protect his eyes, but I saw a red welt rise across his forehead. He tried to rush Bodine but Bodine moved fast for his size and weight, and kept a distance of 15 feet or more betwix them. Each time the long whip curled out it cracked like a rifle, and it never missed.

I don't know how long the fight had been going on, but it seemed hours to me, and Big Eli hadn't laid a hand on Bodine. His shirt had been ripped to shreds and his big shoulders and neck were cut and bleeding and so were his face and arms. The grin had disappeared from Bodine's face and sweat was running down the fat furrows which he didn't bother to wipe away.

The tip of the lash stripped a yard of cloth from Big Eli's jeans and one leg was laid bare, and again the whip cracked and the other pants leg ripped and dragged on the ground. I couldn't stand it any longer, for I was crying mad, and I reached down and picked up a burning chunk from the fire. Before I had a chance to throw it at Bodine, Bob Morgan knocked it from my hand.

"Keep out of this or you'll get hurt," he said.

Big Eli must have seen it happen for he rushed Bodine fast and Bodine had to sidestep to get out of his way. As Bodine did he had his back to Morgan and me and I saw him raise his right hand above his shoulders to bring down the lash on Big Eli again. It curled like a striking adder over my head and I saw a hand reach out and grab it. Bodine swung the stock forward but it jerked from his hand and sailed high in the air like Big Eli's badge had done.

He and I turned at the same time to see who had done it, and it was Bob Morgan. Bob coiled the whip in his fingers, ready to strike and Bodine halted.

"I'll get you for that," Bodine yelled, but he didn't try then for he saw Big Eli coming at him.

It wasn't exactly a cheer that ran through the crowd, but was more like a sudden stir of wings when a flock of swallows take



flight from a leafy tree. Bodine braced himself and put up his fists, but he glanced sideways to see if he could get away. Big Eli had him cornered, and his big fists slashed at the fat face like the whip had done to him.

Once Big Eli stopped and laughed at him, and the men about the fire laughed, too. Bodine tried to run, but he fell to his knees and mired in the mud like a fat hog. Then Big Eli dragged him to his feet and, like he was taking aim at a buck a mile away, drew back his fist and drove it into Bodine's face. Bodine sagged down into the road and rolled over like he was dead. Big Eli stood over him, wiping his hands on what was left of his jeans, and then he turned to Bob Morgan.

"His rig's at the tavern," he said. "Go get it."

Bob Morgan pushed through the crowd, and Big Eli said to me, "Go get her," and I knew he meant Hannah.

She was waiting in the door of the tavern as I came up to her and I didn't know what to say except, "Something's happened. You'd better come." I walked beside her and when the men in the crowd saw us coming they opened a path for us. She stopped in front of Big Eli and looked at him, saw the cuts and blood and his torn rags, and then she looked at Stan Bodine.

"Is he dead?" she asked.

Big Eli looked at her like she was a stranger.

"No, but the only reason he ain't is because he's yours," he said.

Bob Morgan drove up in the rig. Big Eli lifted Bodine to his shoulder and rolled him into the seat. Hannah climbed up beside him and took the reins, and the two horses moved off.

I looked around and saw Doc Haney standing there, his kit in his hand. Somebody must have sent for him.

"Come, Doc," Big Eli said. "I'll need some stitches."

When we got in the house, Big Eli told Doc to look me over first, but I wasn't hurt bad and Aunt Soph took me to the kitchen and washed off the blood and mud. Big Eli told me to go outside. He didn't want me to see him being sewed up.

The bonfire had about burned out and I chunked it. A wagon with four mules strained and groaned through the mud toward me. Astride the rear off critter was the boy I had the fight with and his face was still smeared with the char from my burned stick. When he saw me he grinned and I grinned back but we didn't say anything. As he passed he looked at the whip he held in his hand like he was trying to make up his mind about something. Then he let it drop to the ground. I waited to see if it was an accident that he dropped it, but when he looked back and grinned I knew he meant for me to have it and I picked it up. But when he was out of sight I stuck it under the coals and in a few seconds bright yellow flames jumped up and then turned to blue. I didn't want that whip any more.

## CHAPTER 9

WHEN Uncle Zack was through receiving the crop he began sorting the leaf into grades and he spent a lot of time teaching Big Eli how it was done. After they were sorted the different grades were made up into bales or stored in hogsheads for curing and then they were ready for shipment to New Orleans. The bales and hogsheads were hauled by wagon to the Tennessee where they were put aboard keelboats and Kentucky broadhorns. Only the keelboats went all the way to New Orleans. The broadhorns went down river to Pekin, where the Tennessee joined the Ohio, and their loads were then shifted to keelboats which made the trip west on the Ohio to the Mississippi and south to New Orleans.

When a load had to be shifted from broadhorn to keelboat, Uncle Zack and Big Eli went along with the shipment to Pekin.

"Them broadhorn men have a habit of forgetting to put all the load aboard the keels," Uncle Zack said. "I have to watch 'em like a hawk."

I had heard a lot about the men who ran the broadhorns, how

they feared nobody and claimed to be the toughest men on the river. I got to know how tough they were while the shipping season was on. They liked to fight just for the fun of it and when they couldn't pick a fight they'd maul each other about. They had a song about how tough they were.

My mammy was a 'gator  
My pappy was a bull,  
I can whip my weight in wildcats  
And drink my belly full.

They were noisy men and they laughed and yelled a lot but they worked hard and were not afraid of the river. I saw them load a broadhorn until the ramp was less than a foot out of water and then pole out into the current to race some keelboater coming downstream from the shoals.

I went with Uncle Zack and Big Eli on one of the trips to Pekin. We were almost in sight of the Ohio when I saw a bunch of flatboats standing off a sand bar about a hundred yards. I had never seen flatboats like them before. They had racks on each side and lines hung down from the racks into the water.

"What're they fishing for?" I asked Uncle Zack.

"Mussels," he said. "They sell the shells to make pearl buttons out'n."

Late that day the mussel fishermen came ashore at Pekin and unloaded their catch and Big Eli and Uncle Zack and I watched them. Soon a man driving a light wagon came down and began buying the shells by the bushel. I could see that Uncle Zack was surprised at the prices the man was paying and he asked the buyer a lot of questions. On the way upriver the next day we passed a bunch of flatboaters hovering over a mussel bed.

"I was thinking," said Uncle Zack to Big Eli, "that when work slacks off you might give that a try." He motioned toward the mussel fishermen. "You can make day wages or better," he said.

I might have known why Uncle Zack was asking questions of

the shell buyer. He never showed interest in anything unless there was money in it. About a month after we had been to Pekin, Big Eli started building a flatboat. He let me help tar the seams and build the racks for the draglines and then we racked the boat on sawhorses and let it set and season.

Several weeks later we put the boat in the river and put up the racks on each side. Big Eli bought a charcoal burner and an iron pot which he set up in the stern. We attached small weights to the lines and Big Eli rowed about a mile upstream and then we lowered the racks so the lines would drag bottom when we passed over a sand bar.

"Now we'll drift back," Big Eli said.

Late in the afternoon we struck a small bed of mussels and I pulled up the racks. There were more than a dozen shells clamped to the weights and the ends of the lines but instead of starting a charcoal fire under the pot and boiling them loose, Big Eli took his knife and pried them open.

"There's a trick to it," he said, and showed me how, by cutting through the hinge of the two shells, it killed the mussel and the shell popped open. The outside was rough and greenish but, when the meat was scraped out, the inside was slick and glossy like the butt of a dueling pistol.

Big Eli pointed to the gloss. "That's what they make buttons out'n," he said.

Just before sundown we tied up the boat and headed for Humility, taking a few of the shells with us for Uncle Zack to see. He thought they were good quality and told Big Eli to keep looking for a bed that would pay off. I didn't care whether we found one or not. We were having fun, Big Eli and me, just drifting up and down the river. Sometimes we'd sing but mostly we just lolled in the bright sun or took a dive, and now and then Big Eli would seem to forget where he was or that I was with him and I'd catch him looking off into space or into the water. He was thinking things over, but what I didn't know.

We made the first good strike on the third day and dropped the anchor in about ten feet of water. The lines were loaded when we lifted the racks and Big Eli started the charcoal fire and soon had the pot of water boiling. Then he picked up the lines and dropped them into the hot water and the mussels popped open. Big Eli fished out the shells and dropped them into the bottom of the boat after he scraped out the meat and tossed it into the river.

The flies were bad because the mussels had a fishy smell that was higher than a sick carp and it got on our hands and riggin'. After a few days soap and water couldn't get shed of it.

The first night after we made the strike we saw Faro come running to meet us as we got near Uncle Zack's, but when we got within a few yards of him he stopped dead in his tracks like he had made a mistake. He started to growl and it wasn't until Big Eli spoke to him and laughed that he knew for certain it was us. I almost had a fight with some boys the next night when they called me "stink fish" as I walked past.

The Sunday after we found the mussel bed, Big Eli and I waited until Aunt Soph had cleared the breakfast dishes and then we heated water and got ready to scrub down with lye soap. Aunt Soph went on ahead of us to meeting. When we got there she was sitting beside Miss Susie and there were two spaces left for us. We had been sitting there a couple of minutes when I saw the tavern keeper's wife turn around and look at us and then hold her kerchief over her nose. She whispered to the blacksmith's wife, who was sitting next to her, and she began holding her nose, too.

Somebody back of us sniggered and then I looked around and other folks were holding their noses, too. Just before Uncle Zack mounted the hogshead to start preaching, Miss Susie Spann got up out of her seat.

"Excuse me," she said.

Big Eli stood up to let her pass. She put her kerchief over her nose and went across the aisle to sit with her brother.

Uncle Zack had to pound his fist to quiet things down so he could start the meeting. I knew then it would take more than lye soap to get the stink off of us.

That afternoon I heard Aunt Soph talking to Uncle Zack about it. "We're the laughingstock of the village," she said.

Aunt Soph never did anything she thought would make folks displeased with her and it upset her a heap when Big Eli and I did.

## CHAPTER 10

FOLKS CALLED Zybee Fletcher the snake doctor. He didn't doctor snakes but traveled from place to place peddling herb cures. Besides his herb cures, Zybee also carried a lot of bottles with snakes inside, pickled in alcohol. He would put these in plain sight where everybody could see them and it always drew a crowd. Two of them were rattlers, and big ones. One had fourteen rattles on its tail and the other had eight. When the crowd got big enough Zybee would spend the first half hour telling big tales about the snakes and how he came by them.

"This rattler here," he'd say and pick up the bottle with the 14-button snake, "killed 50 men before it was captured in the fever-infested swamps of Florida." The other one, he claimed, had attacked him in California but he had captured it alive by a charm he had learned from a Hindu in India.

I first saw Zybee when Big Eli and I came to Humility to live with Uncle Zack. The next time I saw him he was standing on the east bank of the Tennessee River late one afternoon. He was calling to Big Eli and me to come and get him and his herb case.

About a week before I had found something bright and shiny in one of the mussel shells and showed it to Big Eli. He held it in his fingers and eyed it a spell and then he said, "Little Eli, you've found a pearl."

"Pearls are worth lots of money," I said, remembering what I had learned from Scriptures.

"Some are," he said.

"Is this one?" I asked.

"I don't know," he said, "but until we find out don't say anything to Uncle Zack about finding it."

"I won't," I said.

After that I looked into all of the shells and in the next few days I found a lot of pearls, some bigger than the first I had found and the rest not so big. None of them was as big as a pea and instead of being round, like I thought a pearl would be, they were all sorts of shapes but they were mighty pretty just the same. Big Eli kept them in his poke, and now and then he'd take them out and hold them in the palm of his hand and let the sun shine on them.

When Zybee Fletcher hailed us to ferry him across the river, it was about time we knocked off for the day anyway, so Big Eli headed the boat toward him.

He was wearing a tall beaver and a crow-tailed coat and he had



his pants legs tucked in his boottops to keep them from getting dusty. A heavy gold watch chain swung across his vest which was made of antelope tails. He greeted us like we were kin.

"Howdy, cousins," he said and tossed his case in the boat and climbed in. Then he saw the racks and lines.

"What's them?" he asked. Big Eli told him but he didn't waste any words.

The mussel shells were still clamped to the lines and I took out my pocketknife and began clipping the shells open. The third one I opened had a pearl in it. A big one. I held it up for Big Eli to see.

"Let's see that, cousin," Zybee Fletcher said, and I showed it to him, wondering later if I had made a mistake. He laughed big.

"So that's what you're doing, cousins," he said. "Searching for the wealth of kings!"

Big Eli started to explain we were fishing for mussel shells to sell to button makers, but Zybee Fletcher only laughed.

"You can't fool me, cousin," he said. "You're hunting for pearls!"

"We've found a few," said Big Eli. "We've been wondering if they're worth anything."

Zybee asked to see them and Big Eli got out his poke and poured the pearls into the palm of his hand. The setting sun played rainbows on them.

Zybee cleared his throat. "Have you tried to sell them, cousin?" he asked, and Big Eli said he hadn't.

"Then I'll share a secret," he said and stuck his thumbs in the pockets of his vest. "I've just got back from a tour of Europe. While in Old England I met an officer of His Majesty, George the Fourth. He confided to me that the King is searching the world for pearls of good quality."

My ears started to hum and I looked at Big Eli and saw he was drinking it in, too. "How about these?" Big Eli asked.

"Perfect specimens of fresh-water pearls," said Zybee.

"How would I go about selling them to a king?" Big Eli asked.



"A king is human, like the rest of us," said Zybee. "Just write him a letter and tell him how many you have, how big they are and where you got them. Be certain to tell him that, where you got them."

Big Eli nodded his head.

"You'd better not tell anybody I have shared this royal secret with you," Zybee said, looking around like somebody might be hiding in the bushes.

"I'll not," said Big Eli, "and don't you tell anybody I'm writing the letter."

"I won't, cousin," said Zybee.

We started up the road to Humility and I wondered what Aunt Soph and Uncle Zack and Miss Susie would give to know that we were going to write a letter to a king.

## CHAPTER 11

WE DIDN'T go back to the river the next day. The postrider, who came to Humility twice a week, was due in with the mail. After breakfast Big Eli went to Uncle Zack's warehouse and I stayed in the back yard to play with my new pet — a young crow I'd found when a tree with a crow's nest in it blew down. I got a name for him from Scripture: Moses. By then he was jet-black and half-grown and he spent most of his time at the back door squalling for vittles. Aunt Soph didn't like him because he made so much noise. Faro didn't like him, either, and would show his teeth and growl. Faro was jealous.

I had heard that crows could talk and I spent a lot of time that morning trying to teach Moses to say his name but he didn't seem to catch on. Uncle Zack heard me trying, and said, "You have to split a crow's tongue to make him talk."

I had heard that before and asked Big Eli about it.

"No, you don't," I said to Uncle Zack. "Big Eli says it's not true."

I got a biscuit for Moses and when he finally filled his crop he

flew to the tiptop of the big maple in the back yard. I started to the warehouse to see what Big Eli was doing, but I met him halfway and he had a letter in his hand.

"I wrote it," he said, showing it to me.

I fell in step with him. "Are you going to post it?" I asked.

"Yes, the postrider just came in," he said, and I looked toward the tavern and saw the postrider's horse with the saddlebags swinging over his rump.

"Don't say anything to Uncle Zack or anybody about it," Big Eli told me and I said I wouldn't.

When we got to the tavern a lot of people were there and the postrider was calling out names and passing out mail he had brought. I took Uncle Zack's newspaper which he got once a week from St. Louis and also a letter for Aunt Soph from her sister in Carolina. After the mail was passed out, Big Eli went to the desk and handed the postrider the letter to the King. When the rider put it on the scales to weigh it I saw him reading the name and where it was going. He looked up at Big Eli and studied him a second but he didn't say anything. Then he said how much it would cost to send it and Big Eli paid him.

As we came out of the tavern, Zybee Fletcher was setting up his herb case and getting ready to sell his cures to the people when they came out. He smiled at us.

"Good morning, cousins," he said.

Big Eli said howdy and paused for a minute. "I just sent the letter," he told the snake doctor.

Zybee looked surprised but he said, "Bravo, cousin. You may soon be sleeping amid the wealth of the Empire."

In my mind's eye I saw Big Eli and me laying on a bed tick stuffed with golden feathers.

When I'd given Uncle Zack and Aunt Soph their mail, I went back to hear Zybee Fletcher peddle his herb cures. His herb case and bottled snakes were standing ready, but he wasn't in sight. Then I heard loud laughing in the tavern. I looked through the

window and saw Zybee surrounded by the men who had been waiting for the mail. He was telling them something they thought was mighty funny. I moved close to the door and listened.

"So I told him the King was in the market for pearls and he'd better write the King a letter," Zybee was saying.

The crowd laughed and there was a lot of backslapping. Zybee was laughing so hard he could hardly go on with his talk, but I heard him say, "Them pearls ain't worth the picking," and he doubled up and slapped his knees, "but the big oaf took it hook, line and sinker."

He had made a fool of Big Eli on purpose. Mussel pearls were no good after all and I knew we wouldn't be sleeping on a bed tick of golden feathers ever. I felt the blood running hot in my face and tears squeezing out the corners of my eyes.

At first I thought of running to tell Big Eli what I'd heard, but I changed my mind. I didn't want Big Eli to feel as bad as I was feeling and, besides, I was afraid of what he might do to Zybee Fletcher.

I went back to Uncle Zack's, but I didn't go in the house, and when Aunt Soph called me in at noon to eat I had lost my appetite complete.

"What's ailing you?" Big Eli asked me when I didn't touch the vittles on my plate.

"Nothing," I said, and it was all I could do to keep from crying.

Big Eli went squirrel hunting later that afternoon and Uncle Zack sauntered out of the house and up the road toward the tavern. A few minutes later Miss Susie came hurrying into the house, and I wondered what was up. She said, "You play outside for a while, Little Eli," and closed the door.

About ten minutes later I saw Uncle Zack coming home and he was making tracks like a bobcat was after him.

"Has Elias come back yet?" he shouted at me and I said he hadn't, and he went in the house and shut the door. I knew he had found out.

About that time I heard Faro bark and saw him and Big Eli coming out of the woods and Big Eli had a bunch of squirrels slung over his shoulder. I didn't know what to do or say, but as he came up to me I said, "You'd better not go in now."

He looked at me, puzzled. "Why not?" he asked.

All I could think of to say was "Miss Susie and Uncle Zack are in there."

Big Eli tossed back his head and laughed.

"It's about the pearls," I said, knowing I couldn't hide it any longer. "They've found out, I think."

His face sobered and I saw him glance up the road toward the tavern. "Come on," he said, and we walked into the house, leaving the front door open again.

Uncle Zack and Aunt Soph and Miss Susie were sitting around the kitchen table when we walked through the big room and their faces were set as firm as an angel's on a tomb rock and just as solemn.

"I reckon you know you've been made a fool of?" Uncle Zack said.

"How so?" asked Big Eli and sat down in a chair.

Uncle Zack told what he had heard at the tavern and he knew a lot more than I did.

"If you'd have come to me in the first place, I'd have told you them mussel pearls ain't worth nothing," he said, sounding like his pride had been hurt because Big Eli went to Zybbee Fletcher first.

"The whole village is abuzz about it," Miss Susie spoke up and her tone was scolding.

I saw Big Eli getting red.

"You're the laughingstock of the village," said Aunt Soph.

Uncle Zack nodded his head like he was glad the womenfolks sided with him. "Already they're calling you the man who wrote a letter to the King," he said. "And I reckon you'll never live it down."

"Or us, either," said Aunt Soph and she clucked a couple of times like she did when she was scared or pestered.

For a few seconds everything was quiet. Uncle Zack and Aunt Soph and Miss Susie just looked at Big Eli waiting for him to say something but he was looking at nothing in particular, just staring and thinking. Then he started to laugh and his long yellow hair crumpled on his shoulders when he threw his head back and he rocked on the legs of his chair.

"Is that why you couldn't eat your vittles?" he asked me, and I nodded that it was.

"I heard the snake doctor telling the men at the tavern," I said, and Big Eli swept me in his arms and kept on laughing like he thought it was as funny as the men at the tavern did.

Miss Susie got up and went home. I guess she couldn't understand why Big Eli was laughing so hard. Sometimes I couldn't understand Big Eli either.

BIG ELI and I went on fishing for mussel shells after that but we didn't bother saving the pearls we found now and then. Uncle Zack bought the shells from Big Eli and shipped them by keelboat to Cincinnati but I soon knew he wasn't warm to the business. I didn't know whether it was because he wasn't getting paid as much as he expected, which he wasn't, or because folks in the village were taking it out on him about the letter to the King.

Men would wink at each other when they saw him and they'd chuckle and ask him, "How's your pearl diver, Zack?" or "Sold any pearls to the King lately, Zack?" Uncle Zack would squeeze up his face and ooze out a grin, but I knew it hurt him to do it.

One night Big Eli and I went fox hunting with the Morgan brothers and young Bob grinned at Big Eli and asked him, "Have you had a letter from George of late?" meaning the King, of course.

Big Eli reached over and plucked a burning chunk from the fire and tossed it into Bob's lap and Bob scampered to his feet and

brushed the sparks off his britches. Everybody laughed including Big Eli and young Bob. That was the last they ever said anything to Big Eli about it. Village folks didn't say anything to Big Eli but they'd grin and wink at each other when he passed by and I knew that Big Eli saw them but he never let on he did.

## CHAPTER 12

BIG ELI and I were the first people in Humility to hear about the steamboat. We were shellfishing over a sand bar when a broadhorn came up the river and the crew stopped poling to rest and swap talk.

"A steamboat's coming up river in a couple of days," one of the men told me. "It's tied up at Pekin now."

"It'll be the first one up the river, won't it?" Big Eli asked and the man said it was.

We quit fishing early that day and went home to break the news. Uncle Zack was so pleased by it that he got out the bottle of French brandy. He poured drinks for Big Eli and himself, then raised his glass and held it at arm's length in front of him.

"Here's to steamboats," he said. "May we have lots of 'em!"

He spent the next half hour telling how the keelboaters and broadhorns had robbed him and other shippers along the river. Steamboats, he said, would haul his tobacco to New Orleans for half the price and ten times as fast. That would mean more money in Uncle Zack's pocket. Aunt Soph favored steamboats for another reason. She had never been to New Orleans with Uncle Zack because he said it wasn't respectable for a woman to travel by broadhorn or keelboat.

"Now I can go to New Orleans like a lady," she said, eyeing Uncle Zack like she was daring him to think up a reason why she couldn't.

After supper, Uncle Zack said he was going to the tavern to tell everybody about the steamboat coming upriver in a couple of

days. Aunt Soph said she wanted to tell Miss Susie about it and would go along with him. I went along, too, but when we got to Miss Susie's house, Aunt Soph made Uncle Zack go inside with her and I went on to the tavern to wait for him.

The postrider's horse was at the rack and when I went in the tavern the postrider was calling out the names of people who had mail.

I saw him and the tavern keeper with their heads together and they were looking at a letter like they were trying to make out the name or something. Both of them looked about the crowd like they hoped to see somebody in particular. Then the tavern keeper saw me and called me over to the desk.

"Where's Big Eli?" the tavern keeper asked.

"At Uncle Zack's," I said.

"Go get him," he said. "Tell him there's a letter for him."

"I'll carry it to him," I said.

The tavern keeper shook his head. "Not this letter," he said loud enough for folks around to hear him. "This is a letter from the King."

Mouths began popping open like chestnut burrs after a heavy frost. I forgot all about the steamboat and headed out to get Big Eli.

"They're topping your cotton," said Big Eli when I told him.

"No, they're not," I argued. "I saw the letter myself."

That convinced him and we headed for the tavern. By that time everybody in the place knew about the letter and they opened a path for Big Eli and me to get to the desk.

"There's a letter for me, I hear," said Big Eli.

The tavern keeper nodded his head like he wasn't much surprised about it, but his hands were shaking he was so excited. "It looked important," he said, "so I thought you'd better come for it yourself."

Big Eli didn't say anything but took the letter and stuffed it in his pocket. Folks looked very disappointed that he didn't open it

there and we had to push our way through the crowd to get out.

When we fetched up at home, Big Eli opened the letter, took out the thick white note paper and spread it on the table under the turpentine lamp. In the upper left-hand corner was a lion and a unicorn and under them were some words I couldn't read.

"Is it from the King?" I asked.

"No, but it's from the King's chamberlain," said Big Eli. He saw I didn't understand and he explained that a King's chamberlain was a man who looked after the King's chores, such as writing letters.

"What about the pearls?" I asked.

"I'll read it to you," he said.

Dear Mr. Wakefield:

His Majesty has asked me to acknowledge receipt of your letter of recent date and to inform you that, at present, his collection of pearls is quite adequate. However, if at any time in the future, His Majesty should be in the market for pearls such as you describe, he requests me to communicate with you. His Majesty wishes you success and good health.

Big Eli folded the letter and put it back in the envelope, but there was no sign of disappointment on his face.

"They need never know what was in the letter if we don't tell," he said.

"I won't tell," I said, "but the tavern keeper will tell everybody you got it."

"Let him," said Big Eli, and he looked at the clock on the mantel. It was almost nine. He turned and faced me.

"Would you like a ride on a steamboat?" he asked.

I didn't see what a steamboat had to do with the King's letter, but I knew Big Eli wouldn't have asked me if he didn't have something in mind. "I'd admire to," I said.

"Then let's go before Uncle Zack and Aunt Soph come back



home," he said. "We'll go to Pekin in our boat. With a nine-mile current behind us we should be there before daybreak."

We shoved into the river with the moonlight spread like a blanket of silver all around us. Big Eli braced the oars against the current and stopped the boat when we got over the mussel beds. He reached into his pocket and brought out the poke of pearls. He upended it into the palm of his hand and studied them a spell, then he held his hand over the side of the boat and opened his fingers. The pearls slid into the water, making a rustling sound like a big moccasin easing off a limb into a swamp.

It was still dark and the moon had paled when we first saw the shore lights of Pekin down-river. We couldn't make out the steamboat at first but when we finally sighted her pilot lights Big Eli nosed our boat into shore. We pulled it up the bank under the branches of a big oak tree. By the time we walked to the landing where the steamboat was tied up, day was beginning to break. The steamboat was a stern-wheeler with two decks and two smoke-stacks. She heaved with the wash of the current and her shore lines groaned under the strain like the hub of an ox cart that needed greasing.

I nearly jumped out of my boots when, at six o'clock, there was a great hissing of steam and the boat whistle shook the air with a blast that could be heard for miles. Big flocks of ducks and geese, feeding in the canebrakes and in the wild rice of the swamps, soared into the air by the thousands and circled about with an awful clatter. I reached out a hand toward Big Eli, but he didn't take it.

Big Eli looked at me and saw I was scared. "Let on like you eat a steamboat every morning for breakfast," he said.

Big Eli was like an Injun. He never let on he was scared, if he was.

Soon after the blast had split the air, people began coming out on deck and others came down from the houses in the town.

Big Eli was looking about the crowd like he expected to see

somebody he knew. Soon he did. It was one of the shell buyers we had talked to when we came to Pekin aboard the broadhorn with Uncle Zack. He saw us and came up and shook hands.

"Did you bring shells to market?" the man asked.

"No," said Big Eli, "but I've got a good shell boat I'd pleasure to sell for the right price."

"Where is it?" the shell buyer asked.

"Follow me," said Big Eli and led the way back to where we had hid the boat under the overhanging oak. We pushed it into the river and the shell buyer climbed in. He rocked it fore and aft to test the balance and looked over the racks. He seemed satisfied and stepped ashore again. It didn't take them long to strike a deal and the shell buyer paid off in silver. Then he climbed in the boat again and rowed off. Big Eli and I went back to the landing. Our shell-fishing days were over, and I knew it.

Big Eli jingled the coins in his pocket and said, "We'll eat breakfast aboard the boat." We walked up the sagging plank laid between the landing and the deck.

I had never seen anything like the dining room of the steamboat. It was lined with polished wood, mostly walnut with inlay and trimmings of yellow poplar. A black man wearing an apron led us to a table and stood back of each chair as we sat down. Big Eli took off his hat and put it under his chair and I did, too.

The black man brought a bottle and small glass and put them down in front of Big Eli. "Brandy, sir," he said, and Big Eli poured himself a dram.

"Bacon or ham with eggs, catfish or wild duck," the black man said. We both ordered wild duck, as we were used to eating hog meat and catfish at Uncle Zack's.

Before we were through eating other people came in for breakfast. Most of the men wore fancy shirts and boots that shone like a buckeye. There were four or five women and they wore the prettiest dresses I had ever seen and their hair was combed fine as a filly's tail on horse-swapping day.

Two of them with pink cheeks and rosy lips smiled at me and I smiled back at them, but when I turned to see if Big Eli had caught me at it, he was looking at them and smiling and there was a twinkle in his eyes. I wasn't certain then it was me they were smiling at in the first place.

He saw how red my face was, for I was blushing.

"Let on like you eat it for breakfast," he said, meaning I shouldn't blush when a pretty woman smiled at me. I guess he was used to it. I wasn't. I wondered why Hannah and Miss Susie didn't have pink cheeks and rosy lips like the two women who had smiled at us.

A man in a uniform came around before we finished eating and asked if we were going upriver. Big Eli said we were going part way, about 40 miles, and paid his fare. There was no charge for me. As we left the dining room the two pink-cheeked women smiled at us again and Big Eli bowed and then put on his hat at a dude's angle when we walked through the door. I tilted my hat back and to the side like he did.

The crew was pulling in the lines, getting ready to shove off. I could feel the engines shaking the whole boat and I jumped again when the whistle blew and the big paddle wheel at the stern began to churn the river. We were on our way.

When we couldn't see the landing any more, Big Eli and I walked about the boat to look at it. One big room had a sign, "Salon," over the door. There was fine furniture in it and on the walls were colored pictures of New Orleans, Memphis and three steamboats much larger than the one we were on. At a big table in the center of the room a group of men were playing a game which Big Eli said was roulette. Some of the women I had seen in the dining room were watching the game. Big Eli and I joined up with them. There was a lot of money on the table and a big pile of gold and silver coins was stacked in front of the man who was spinning the roulette wheel and taking the bets.

After a spell a man I had seen get on the boat at Pekin lost

several bets running. He shoved back his chair and got up and I guessed he'd had enough of it. One of the two women who had smiled at us said to Big Eli, "*M'sieu*, perhaps it is your lucky day, no?" She smiled and rolled her dark eyes at him. Big Eli touched the brim of his beaver, bowed and sat down.

I guessed she was French for she talked like a trapper we had known in the Cumberlands and he was French.

The man who ran the game called out, "Play!" and spun the wheel while the little ball swayed and danced around trying to find a spot to settle down. Big Eli reached into his jeans and brought out a couple of coins and put them on black. Red won and the man reached out his stick and dragged in Big Eli's bet. The French lady smiled at Big Eli and said, "Better luck next time, *M'sieu*." Big Eli ducked into his jeans again and put his money on black. That time he won.

"*Très bon!*" said the French lady and tossed him a kiss with the tips of her fingers.

Big Eli switched to red and won again. He stayed with the red and while he didn't have to dig into his jeans again, his winnings stayed about even until we were halfway to where we were going. I got tired watching the game and went to the upper deck to watch the pilot miss snags and sand bars. When I came back to tell him the boat was getting close to home Big Eli was still playing, and in front of him was a pile of gold and silver. The wheel stopped spinning and the man with the stick shoved some more coins at Big Eli.

As Big Eli picked them up I saw the man with the stick look at the pretty French lady and their eyes talked. Big Eli saw me and grinned when I looked at his money.

"Don't tell Uncle Zack where I got it," he said.

"Play!" said the man with the stick and spun the wheel.

Big Eli crooked his neck and looked through the window toward the shore.

"We're almost there," I said.



Big Eli pulled his bandanna from his pocket and spread it out in front of him and pushed the pile of coins into it. Then he drew the ends of the bandanna together and tied them into strong knots.

The French lady put her little pink hand on his shoulder and opened her eyes wide as a mussel shell on hot coals. "*M'sieu*, you're not going to quit?" she asked like she might bust out crying if he did.

"*Oui*," said Big Eli and pushed his chair back. He had learned that much French from the trapper in the Cumberlands.

When he got up and turned his back to the table, I saw the French lady glance at the man with the stick again. He curled his lip into a sort of a smile, spun the wheel and called "Play!"

When we got on deck we could see people on the riverbank about a quarter of a mile upstream. I could make out Uncle Zack's rig and team and the Morgan brothers' wagon and mules. There were several women with parasols. They had come to see the

steamboat and I got to feeling important at the thought of walking down the gangplank with everybody looking at us and wondering how we came to be on the boat.

The boat captain was standing at the rail of the upper deck looking down at us. Big Eli smiled and pointed at the people on shore, meaning that was where we wanted to get off the boat. The captain smiled and went back to the wheelhouse. Two long blasts from the whistle shook the air and scared the daylights out of the horses and mules on shore.

I saw Uncle Zack and others run toward their teams and in a matter of seconds they were struggling to keep them from running away, wagons, rigs and all. I was so interested in what was going on I wasn't paying attention to the boat. Then I heard Big Eli yell, "Hey!"

I turned to see what was the matter. He was looking up at the pilothouse trying to get the attention of the captain. Then I saw that the boat was still in midstream and we were already abreast of the people on shore. The men and women I had seen at the roulette table were on deck, only a few feet away, and they were laughing at Big Eli.

Big Eli screamed "Hey!" again, and I could see he was mad.

"We don't stop here, friend," the man who ran the roulette game called to him. He grinned and the others laughed.

"We do," said Big Eli. He glanced at the big wheel churning the river, then at the shore, to judge the distance. The gamblers must have guessed what he was up to. They started toward us.

Big Eli dropped the bandanna between his feet. "Look out for the paddle wheel," he said to me. The next thing I knew he gripped me by the seat of the pants and the shoulder and lifted me from the deck. "Keep afloat until I reach you," he said and tossed me far over the rail. I spun in the air and as I did I saw the gamblers close in on Big Eli. Then I went under. When I came up the water was boiling all around me but the boat had passed and I was not in danger of the paddle wheel.

I shook the water out of my eyes and ears and began treading water and I could hear screams of women coming from the steam-boat deck. When my ears cleared the fight was still going on. I wondered if I should try to make shore by myself. Then I saw Big Eli leap to the rail. The bandanna was gripped in his teeth. He seemed to pause, then he saw me and jumped in. We waded ashore a few minutes later and everybody crowded around us.

"The boat don't stop here," said Big Eli.

"So I noticed," said Uncle Zack and he looked at the bandanna Big Eli was carrying in his hand.

Big Eli squatted down and untied the knot. Eyes opened wide when folks saw all the money. Big Eli started shoving it into the pockets of his jeans.

"Where'd you get all that?" Uncle Zack asked.

"Wouldn't you pleasure to know?" said Big Eli and he drew a steady bead on Uncle Zack with his eyes. Then he laughed.

Miss Susie sidled up to him and we headed for Uncle Zack's rig with the others trailing us. When we got home Uncle Zack followed us as we went into the kitchen to change to dry clothes. Big Eli took the money out of his pockets and tied it in the bandanna again and then he took the letter from the King's chamberlain, which was soaked, and he spread it out on the hearth so it would dry. Uncle Zack craned his neck to get a good look at it but Big Eli managed to stand betwix him and the letter so he couldn't see the writing but I knew he saw the lion and the unicorn on the envelope. That's all he had to see. He tore into the big room, shutting the door behind him, and I could hear him talking in a low voice to Aunt Soph and Miss Susie. In a few minutes I heard him leave for the tavern.

"Zack thinks we sold our pearls to the King," Big Eli said to me. "The tavern keeper must've told him about the letter."

"Are you going to tell him the truth?" I asked.

"He wouldn't believe me if I did," he said. "We'll let him and the others think what they please."

Big Eli was right. Nobody mentioned the letter or the pearls but it was plain they had made up their minds we had sold the pearls to the King. The next day, when we went to the tavern, people spoke respectful to Big Eli and called him Mister Eli or Mister Wakefield. They hadn't done that before. Mr. Tweedy, the cobbler, came to Uncle Zack's and measured Big Eli for a new pair of boots.

"They'll look exactly like the boots the King wears," he said, and Big Eli told him to make them up.

Miss Susie invited all of us, Big Eli, Uncle Zack, Aunt Soph and me to supper at her home two days after we got home. She was all fluttery about the vittles she put on the table and specially about something in a big bowl which was in the center of the table. After Uncle Zack said blessing, he asked what it was.

"It's suet pudding," she said. "My uncle, who used to be a hostler to the Royal Family, says suet pudding is the King's favorite dish."

I liked pudding and this one looked good with all the steam rising from it. Miss Susie piled my plate high and I pitched into it, thinking it would be sweet and spicy. I nearly choked on the first bite. It was worse than Injun stew, which sometimes was made out of dog. I managed to swallow some of it and then I remembered that Big Eli had told me to always eat what was put on my plate. That was being polite, he said. I decided the only thing to do was get it down fast and I did. Miss Susie was watching me and just as I took the last bite she smiled and said, "Bless Little Eli, how he loves my cooking."

She picked up my plate and filled it again with suet pudding. I ate slow from then on.

When bedtime rolled around Aunt Soph and Uncle Zack and I went home but Big Eli stayed. I climbed into bed and Uncle Zack and Aunt Soph went to the kitchen and shut the door. But I listened.

"She's set her cap for him now," Aunt Soph said.



"Thanks to the letter from the King," said Uncle Zack, like he was proud to be Big Eli's brother.

"I wonder how much he got for his pearls?" Aunt Soph said.

"Must be all of a thousand dollars, maybe more," said Uncle Zack.

I dropped off to sleep and didn't hear Big Eli when he came home. In the days that followed I caught a lot of talk at the tavern and the blacksmith shop. Everybody guessed at the amount Big Eli had got for the pearls, but that wasn't the important thing with them. It was the letter itself. One day the tavern keeper was talking to a stranger when we went in. He nodded his head at Big Eli and whispered to the stranger, "There's the man who got a letter from the King."

Uncle Zack never missed a chance to be seen in Big Eli's company. When the Morgan brothers got up a dance in honor of Big Eli, Uncle Zack hinted around until Anse Morgan invited him and Aunt Soph. I knew it wouldn't be any fun for me, so I stayed home with Faro.

## CHAPTER 13

AFTER the Morgan dance, Big Eli began spending more time at Miss Susie's. With a good supper under his belt, he'd spruce himself up and say to me, "Don't wait up for me, Little Eli. I'll be out late." I was always asleep when he got home. Uncle Zack and Aunt Soph were mighty pleased about this.

One day I overheard them talking in the kitchen and it was about a party to be held in Uncle Zack's barn. I tiptoed to the kitchen door but Aunt Soph heard me.

"You haven't read your Scripture task today," she said. There was no school in the village and because of that I had to read a chapter of Scripture every day from Uncle Zack's Bible.

"Better do it now," Uncle Zack said. Aunt Soph shut the door. I opened at a page near the front. At the top of the page were

the words "Family Record." On that page were written the names of Uncle Zack's kin and the dates when they were born, married and died. My mother's name, Dolly, was next to Big Eli's and mine, though it only told when she married Big Eli and when she died—shortly after I was born.

I was still trying to hear what Aunt Soph and Uncle Zack had to say about the party for I knew they didn't want me to know what they were talking about. They stopped talking and I was about to look for my Scripture task when I happened to notice the date next to my name. Then I realized that in two days I would have a birthday and would be ten years old. I was about to call Uncle Zack and Aunt Soph and remind them of it and then it came to me that's why they didn't want me to hear what they were saying. The party they were talking about was to be for me and it was to be a surprise. I wondered if I would feel any different being ten years old, or if Big Eli would let me blow the Gabriel Horn. I was afraid he wouldn't for I was a long way from being a man and he had said it took a man's wind to blow it. But I guessed I would get presents from him and Uncle Zack and Aunt Soph and maybe other people too. I felt mighty proud that they had remembered my birthday and were going to give a party so big it had to be held in Uncle Zack's warehouse.

The next two days passed mighty slow for me and I spent most of my time in the woods so I wouldn't let on that I knew anything about it. When I came home to eat I noticed that Uncle Zack and Aunt Soph and Big Eli mentioned the party only when they thought I was out of earshot.

I thought Aunt Soph would bake a cake for my birthday but she didn't and I guessed she had asked Miss Susie to bake it so I wouldn't find out about it.

Just before we ate supper the night of the party, Aunt Soph heated a big iron pot of water and Big Eli and I took our baths and decked ourselves out in our best riggin'. It was dark by the time we sat down to eat.

Big Eli patted me on the back and said, "You've got a big surprise coming tonight, Little Eli." I made out like I didn't know a thing and he left for Miss Susie's.

After the dishes and kettles were put away, Aunt Soph told me to go into the big room while she "took her ablutions." In a spell she came out and she had on the dress Big Eli had bought her in Tennessee. She looked mighty sweet and I was right proud when she took hold of my arm, like I was Uncle Zack, and we left for the party.

We found the place almost full of people. Lanterns were hanging all over and three fiddlers were sitting on top of a hog'shead playing for all they were worth and banging their boot heels to the time of the music.

Aunt Soph stopped at the door where Uncle Zack was shaking hands like a politician. I saw the Morgan men and their women-folks and went to talk to them. They were glad to see me but nobody said anything about it being my birthday or me being ten years old. I guessed Big Eli must have told them it was going to be a surprise and he wanted to tell me himself.

The fiddlers had stopped playing when I heard Uncle Zack call out, "Here they come!"

Everybody turned toward the big doors and the fiddlers started bearing down and beating their heels to the music. I saw Big Eli and Miss Susie come through the open doors and everybody began to cheer and clap hands. I had never seen Miss Susie so pretty and she was smiling and laughing like she was enjoying dancing with Big Eli. She didn't smile and laugh as a usual habit.

The music stopped and everybody began to clap hands and cheer. Big Eli and Miss Susie came and stood beside me, though they paid me no heed. Uncle Zack raised his hand to quiet things down and when it did he stepped out a couple of paces onto the floor where everybody could see him. Aunt Soph smiled at Miss Susie and Miss Susie waved her hand at Aunt Soph.

"Ladies and gentlemen," I heard Uncle Zack saying in a high-

pitched voice like a snake doctor selling herb cures. He paused to let things get quieter before he went on.

Big Eli cupped his hand over my shoulder and smiled down at me and whispered, "Here comes the surprise, Little Eli."

Uncle Zack cleared his throat. "At this time, ladies and gentlemen," he said, "it brings me great pleasure to announce the engagement of my esteemed brother, Elias Wakefield, to a lovely and charming lady of this community, Miss Susie Spann."

Everybody cheered and Miss Susie and Big Eli beamed at the folks about them.

"It is for that reason you have been invited here tonight," Uncle Zack started out again.

I don't remember what else he said. People began rushing toward us. I knew by then the party was not to celebrate my birthday, and I knew why Aunt Soph hadn't baked a cake. My birthday had been forgotten completely. The fiddlers started playing again. Big Eli took Miss Susie in his arms, kissed her, and then swung her out on the floor. Everybody clapped hands and began to dance. I headed for the door.

A hundred thoughts were whirling in my head to the time of the music when I reached the black night outside. I wondered if this was what Big Eli had tromped all the way from the Cumberlands for. Uncle Zack had written to Big Eli that The Purchase was a paradise for the hunter, but I knew Miss Susie had bagged Big Eli without firing a shot. He was the hunted, she was the hunter. If I hadn't liked her before, I liked her less now. I wondered if I was beginning to hate Big Eli.

I heard footsteps behind me and I heard a man say, "Wait up for me, Little Eli." It was Bob Morgan, but I didn't stop and he upped his pace and came beside me. "What's the matter, boy?" he asked.

"I won't tell you," I said.

"Yes, you will," he said, and laid his hand on my shoulder. "Something happened back there. What was it?"

I liked Bob Morgan and I knew he liked me. I had to tell somebody or break down crying.

"It's my birthday," I said.

"Your birthday?" he said, like he didn't understand.

"I thought the party was going to be for me," I said. He stopped dead in his tracks and I stopped too.

"I'll be damned," he said, then asked, "Didn't Big Eli know it was your birthday?"

"He forgot about it," I said.

"Let's go back and remind him," Bob said and yanked my arm and I knew he was mad. I jerked away from him.

"No, I won't go back," I said.

"Then I'll go with you, and we'll have a birthday party all our own, Little Eli," Bob Morgan said. We started again toward the house. We were almost to the door when I saw the flickering light through the window. It moved and I knew it was either a match or a candle.

I stopped and whispered, "Somebody's in there!"

"Who?" Bob asked.

"I don't know," I said.

"I'll find out," he said and we moved toward the door, making no sound. Bob opened the door with a jerk and went inside and I followed behind him. Stan Bodine wheeled to face us, holding a candle in his hand.

The bricks in the fireplace where Uncle Zack hid his money were laying on the hearth and the secretary desk had been ransacked and papers were scattered on the floor.

"You, Morgan!" Bodine said and stuck the lighted candle on the mantel.

"What're you doing here, Bodine?" Bob asked him.

Bodine didn't answer and his fat face turned evil.

"Go get Big Eli," Bob said to me, but before I started Bodine said, "No need for that!" Then he stepped a pace toward Bob.

"Morgan," he said, "you butted into my business once before."

I knew he was talking about the time Bob jerked the bull whip out of his hand. "You've butted in for the last time," said Bodine.

I saw the knife flash as it came out of his pocket and he held it point first at chest level and lunged. Bob Morgan tried to sidestep, but Bodine was big and fast on his feet. For a second they grappled and then I saw Bob slide to the floor and roll over on his back. Bodine still had the knife in his hand when I ran screaming through the door. Before I got to the warehouse I heard him mount and ride off cussing the horse.

The fiddlers were playing a hoe-down and the men were stomping their boots and I had to yell at the top of my voice to be heard, and when they saw my scared face everything stopped as sudden and still as death.

"Stan Bodine's knifed Bob Morgan!" I yelled and pointed to the dark outside.

The men didn't wait for more talk. They bolted for the door, but Uncle Zack took time to grab a lantern as he ran.

"Where is he?" Big Eli asked me as we ran outside.

"In the house," I said, and Big Eli yelled to the others, "In the house!"

Big Eli and the Morgan brothers were the first inside and Uncle Zack followed with the lantern and held it over Bob. Anse Morgan and Big Eli knelt down beside Bob and Anse tore away the shirt which was covered with blood. Big Eli felt Bob's pulse and leaned an ear against the bloody chest to hear a heartbeat.

When he straightened up, he said, "He's dead."

"Knifed in the heart," said Anse and looked at his brothers.

Big Eli turned to me. "Did Bodine leave afoot or astride?"

I said, "Astride. I heard him ride off in that direction." I pointed west.

"Get him, men," Big Eli said and the men, except Big Eli, Uncle Zack and Anse Morgan started for their horses.

"Bodine may head for his place," Big Eli said. "I'm riding up there." He stalked out.

In a few minutes I heard him ride out of the horse lot and he drew up at the door. "Get my rifle," he said, and I went in and got it for him. He touched a boot heel to the flank of the horse and was gone into the night.

I stood there thinking how I would remember my tenth birthday the rest of my life.

BY DAYBREAK most of the men came back. They hadn't found a trace of Stan Bodine. Uncle Zack and the Morgan men were starting to fret about Big Eli and there was talk of riding up to Bodine's place to look for him. Before they got started, Big Eli rode in with the Sheriff and Doc Haney, the coroner.

"He didn't go home," Big Eli said as he slid out of the saddle.

"Did you talk to his woman?" Uncle Zack asked.

Big Eli nodded. "Yes," he said, and I knew he had said all he was going to say about that. Then he told the Sheriff about the fight he had with Bodine and how Bob Morgan had jerked the whip out of Bodine's hand.

"So he squared things with Bob last night," said Big Eli. "Now I've got to square things with Bob."

Everybody looked at him, wondering what he meant.

"You can post a bounty of \$1000 for Bodine," he said. "I'll pay it."

The next day they buried Bob Morgan and Uncle Zack preached the funeral.

He quoted Scripture which said it was wrong to kill and those who had killed would pay the penalty come judgment day. He was trying to tell the Morgan brothers and Big Eli that they should let God take care of Stan Bodine. I doubted if they would if they got the chance to do it themselves.

That night I lay awake a long time thinking about Hannah living back in the hills by herself and wondering what she would do, now that she didn't have a man to look after her. I wondered, too, what she would do if Big Eli killed Stan Bodine. I hoped the

Morgans or the Sheriff would get him first. I didn't want her to hate Big Eli.

## CHAPTER 14

UNCLE ZACK liked fancy shirts with pearl buttons on them. About a month after Bob Morgan had been buried, Aunt Soph washed two of Uncle Zack's shirts and hung them on a line in the back yard to dry in the sun. I had gone with Big Eli and Uncle Zack to the bottoms where they looked over a piece of land that Uncle Zack owned. From what they said to each other I could tell they were looking for a likely spot to build a house. That house, I knew, would be ours when Big Eli married Miss Susie Spann.

When we got back Aunt Soph was as mad as I had ever seen her. She shook her finger at me.

"Little Eli," she said, "you've got to get shed of that crow!"

"What's Moses done?" I asked her.

She went into the kitchen and brought back the shirts she had washed and hung on the line to dry. "Look at these," she said, holding them out. They were smeared with muddy crow tracks, and I almost laughed. Uncle Zack was the first to notice that the pearl buttons were gone.

"Where are the buttons?" he asked.

"That crow ate them!" snapped Aunt Soph.

I saw Big Eli quench a smile, but it wasn't funny to Uncle Zack. "That crow's a dadblasted nuisance!" he shouted.

"You've got to kill him, Elias," Aunt Soph said to Big Eli. "I won't have him around here any more."

I started to protest but Big Eli lifted a hand to stop me. "I'll talk it over with Little Eli," he said, looking at Aunt Soph and Uncle Zack.

When they left the room I said to Big Eli, "You won't kill him, will you?"



"There's no need to kill him," Big Eli said, "but we'll have to get shed of him."

"What will we do with him?" I asked.

"Take him to the bottoms and let him go free," he said. "So catch him up in the morning when you feed him."

Big Eli had changed since coming to The Purchase and I blamed Uncle Zack and Aunt Soph and Miss Susie for it. He had always sided with me but now he was knuckling under to Aunt Soph and Uncle Zack. Big Eli knew I loved Moses, and I remembered something he had said about crows.

"Make a pet of a crow and you make an outcast," he had told me. "His kind will shun him like pestilence ever after."

That meant Moses could never go back to the wilds again. Other crows would know he had been around humans and wouldn't have anything to do with him.

"I'll get shed of him myself," I told Big Eli, and my throat got tight.

He looked at me and his eyes softened. "I reckon you'll feel better about it if you do," he said.

The next morning Moses was squalling for his breakfast at the back door when I got up. I hurried into my riggin' for fear Uncle Zack might take a notion in his head to kill him. He was easy to catch but he squawked plenty when I stuffed him into a tow sack so I could carry him away without hurting him. After I ate, Big Eli saddled one of Uncle Zack's mules and shortened the stirrups. I mounted from a stump and heeled the mule into a trot toward the bottoms and Big Eli watched me out of sight.

I rode for nearly a mile through the woods before I thought it was safe to turn off the road and head south. It was almost an hour later that I rode into the clearing and I could see a potlicker dog on the porch of Bodine's house. She jumped up and raced toward me barking and snarling.

Hannah came to the door and when she saw who it was she called off the potlicker. I reined up the mule and slid out of the

saddle and she ran down the porch steps and, before I could say anything, hugged and kissed me and I saw tears in her eyes.

"Little Eli!" she kept saying and then she would hug and kiss me again. Finally she asked, "Do they know you've come here?"

"No, they don't," I said.

"Why did you come?" she asked me, and I held out the tow sack with Moses in it. The mule snorted and backed off.

Hannah looked startled when she saw the sack move like it was alive. I laughed. "I've got a pet crow for you," I said.

She looked puzzled.

"You need him," I said.

She laughed. "Why do I need a pet crow?"

"Big Eli told me once a crow is an Injun's eyes and ears," I said. "Nobody can come around here without him knowing about it long before you do. He'll warn you."

Hannah hugged me again.

"His name's Moses," I said. "You'd better keep him in a chicken coop a few days until he gets used to you."

We found a coop in the back yard and put Moses in it, then we went into the house and Hannah asked me to tell her all I knew about the killing of Bob Morgan.

"Big Eli didn't know much to tell when he was here," she said.

I started out by telling her about the party in Uncle Zack's warehouse and how I thought it was a birthday party for me. When I told how disappointed I was when I found out it was for Big Eli and Miss Susie and how I had left to go to Uncle Zack's house, she put her arm around me and buried her face in the hair of my neck. "Poor boy," she said. Then I wished I hadn't told her about Big Eli's and Miss Susie's being engaged, but she knew about it anyway.

"Stan told me about the party," she said. "He taunted me all that day about it."

"Taunted you?" I repeated, not knowing why he would do that.

She didn't answer right off. "Yes," she finally said. "Stan had

heard that Big Eli offered to marry me the night we got to The Purchase. He thought I was in love with him. He never would believe that Big Eli only offered to wed me to keep me out of trouble."

She got up and walked to the door. "You'd better go now, Little Eli," she said. "They'll be wondering where you are."

I led the mule to a stump and climbed into the saddle; then I headed back the way I had come, entering the village from the direction of the bottoms. Big Eli saw me and came to meet me at the lot gate. When I slid out of the saddle he said, "You went a far piece with Moses."

"I didn't want him to find his way back here," I said, and from the way Big Eli looked at me I was certain he knew I wasn't telling all I knew.

## CHAPTER 15

IT WAS the night of the raising party that I had my bad dream. It had taken five weeks for Big Eli and me and a hired man to fell the timber and cut and trim the logs and shingles for Big Eli's new house, but it was finally done and everything was ready for the raising.

Uncle Zack set the date and passed the word around and the women began cooking up vittles which included cakes and pies. It was decided not to have a dance after the raising because Big Eli didn't think it fitting to the memory of Bob Morgan. There were more than 20 men on hand to help us, including Anse and Terry and Tully Morgan. They cut long poles with forks at the end and used them to lift the logs into place. Because Big Eli and I had notched the timber, the work went fast and each log fitted into place. By noon the walls were up and the rafters set and pegged. The Morgan brothers had brought jugs of cider which only the men drank and by the time they started nailing shingles to the roof, Uncle Zack was so unsteady on his feet that Big Eli

made him take a nap in the shade. Long before sundown the heavy work was done, leaving only the floor and the doors and the bay window to be done by Big Eli and me. Then the raising party broke up and everybody went home.

After supper that night, Big Eli scrubbed up, put on his court-ing duds and went to call on Miss Susie.

Uncle Zack got the Bible and read Scripture to me and Aunt Soph. It was the part about Samson and Delilah and how Samson lost his strength when Delilah cut off his long hair.

I was tired when he quit reading and shucked my riggin' and climbed into bed.

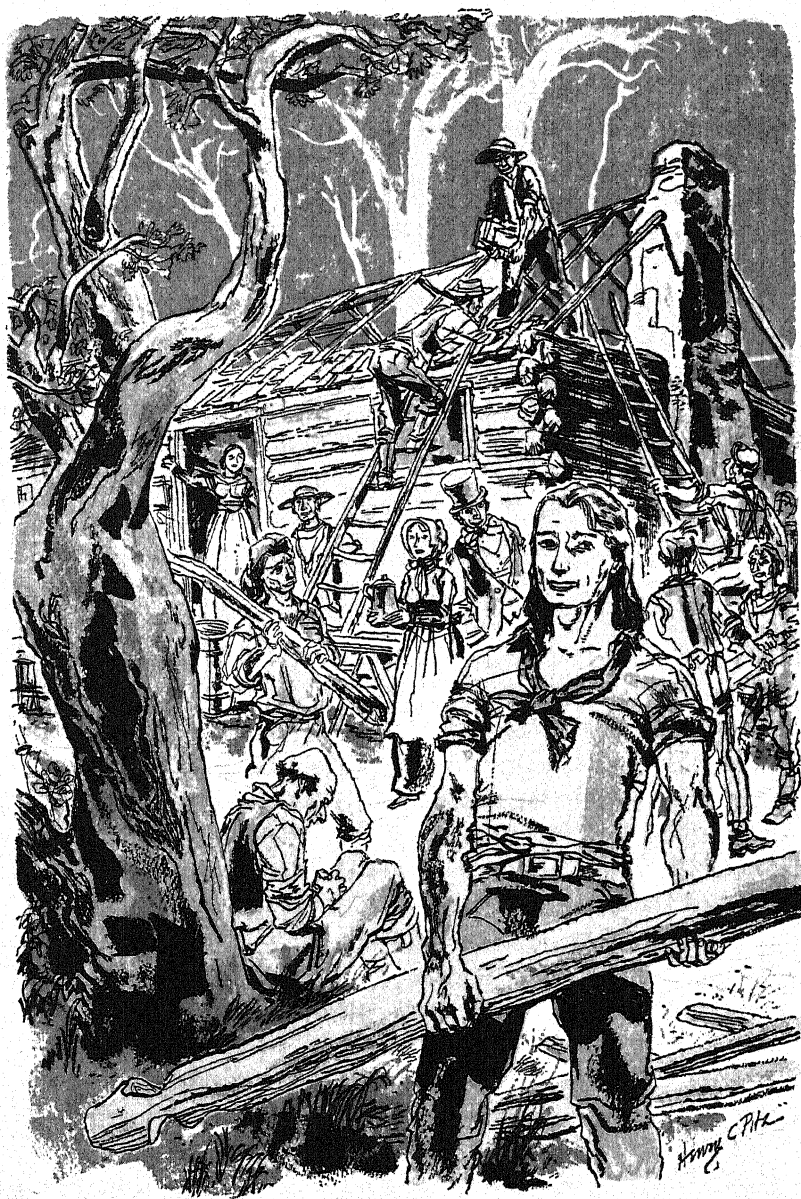
I dreamed I saw Big Eli fighting with Stan Bodine, just like he had fought him that day when Bob Morgan jerked the bull whip out of Bodine's hand. Big Eli was giving Bodine the beating of his life, and then I saw Miss Susie Spann.

She had a long pair of shears in her hand and kept trying to catch up to Big Eli. I tried to yell and tell him but I couldn't make a sound. Then I saw her clip his hair and the long curls rolled down his back and fell in the mud where Stan Bodine trampled on them. Then Big Eli seemed to change from a big man, broad, tall and strong, to a puny man like Uncle Zack. Stan Bodine was laughing at him.

I woke up then, all covered with sweat, and realized Big Eli had come home and was sound asleep next to me. I had to know if he still had his long hair. I slipped a hand toward his head on the pillow and my fingers touched hair that was short and stiff, not long and soft.

It had been cut that night and I knew who had cut it and I hated her. Mine, I thought, would be next but I swore then and there that she would never get the chance. I sneaked over the foot of the bed so as not to wake Big Eli. I put on my riggin' but not my boots for I was afraid Big Eli might hear me as I left. I carried them in my hand until I got outside.

When I started off Faro wanted to follow me and I had to pick



up a stick and run him back. Then I set off at an Injun trot through the woods.

DAY BROKE before I got there and the sun rose red through the mist over the river and the hills. Before I could see the house I heard the potlicker barking and wondered how she had heard me from that distance. And then I remembered Moses and knew he had squawked a warning. As I came into the clearing the potlicker ran toward me, barking and snarling. Hannah came to the door and called off the dog, which followed at a pace, sniffing and growling.

"What on earth fetches you here this time of day?" Hannah asked.

"I've run off," I said.

"Run off?" she repeated.

"I'm never going back there," I told her.

She steadied a look at me but she didn't laugh.

"Breakfast is ready," she said. "There's enough for both of us."

She set another plate at the table and put more eggs and hog meat in the frying pan. When they were done she filled my plate and sat down across the table from me.

"Now let's hear about it," she said and I began to eat and talk. Between bites I told her about the dream and how, when I woke up, I found it was all true and that Big Eli's long hair had been cut. She didn't say anything while I told her the story, but when I finished she threw back her red head and began to laugh like it was the funniest thing she had ever heard. I thought she was laughing at me and she must have known I did.

"I'm not laughing at you, Little Eli," she said.

"What are you laughing at?" I asked.

"At him," she said and started laughing again. "Delilah cut Samson's hair," she kept repeating as she laughed.

"She'll never cut mine," I said. "That's why I ran away."

She laughed again.

"You can't make me go back," I told her.

"I don't aim to try," she said. "Stay here as long as you please."

"I hate her," I said. She looked at me but didn't say anything.

"While I wash the dishes, would you feed the stock for me?" she asked and I said I would. I was glad to be of help to Hannah.

Moses was squawking for his breakfast at the back door. When I went outside he flew to my shoulder and scolded until I crumbled a biscuit and let him eat from my hand.

Hannah was singing as she worked about the house and after I'd fed the stock I sat in the kitchen door and listened to her. Later on I drew water and she began cooking. When the sun was noon high we sat down to eat again. We had just finished and started clearing the dishes when I heard Moses scolding outside.

We both went to the front door. Nobody was in sight but from the way the potlicker was barking I knew there would be soon. Then I saw Faro come out of the timber and a few seconds later Big Eli appeared.

"He's come for you, Little Eli," Hannah said.

"I'll not go back," I said. "You've got to hide me."

She pushed me behind her so Big Eli couldn't catch sight of me. "Get behind the door and don't make a sound," she said. "I'll get shed of him."

I did as she told me, but I watched through the crack of the door. Hannah was standing betwix us and I couldn't see Big Eli until he came up to her and touched the brim of his beaver with his fingers. Then I couldn't believe what I saw. He had his hair, long and curling over his shoulders just like it had always been. And he wasn't puny like I saw him in the dream, but was big and strong. I couldn't understand it.

"I'm after Little Eli," he said.

"Little Eli?" she repeated, and then asked, "why would he come here?"

"He came here once before," Big Eli said, and I wondered how he knew.

"What makes you think so?" Hannah asked.

He tilted his head and pointed to the top of a big sycamore where Moses was still scolding. "He brought the crow here," he said and a smile broke over his face. "Didn't he?"

She didn't answer right off. "It's no cause he should come again," she said finally and her voice was unfriendly. Then she said, "Your woman wouldn't like it if she knew you came here."

She was talking about Miss Susie. For a second the smile left Big Eli's face and his skin reddened.

"No woman tells me where I go," he said.

Hannah laughed like she did when I told her about the dream. "Someday she'll cut that pretty long hair of yours," she told him, "and she'll put a ring in your nose so you can't stray off like this."

She laughed like Beelzebub enjoying the torments of sinners.

Big Eli flexed his fingers and I wondered if he was going to hit her, and I couldn't have blamed him if he had. But he didn't. I knew he was trying to make up his mind about something. All of a sudden he reached out. His left arm went about her waist and he drew her tight against him while his right hand tilted her red head back and he bent his face down against hers and kissed her on the lips time after time. At first she didn't seem to mind, but when he didn't let go she struggled and broke away, slapping him across the face as she did.

"Get out of here!" she screamed at him. "Get out!"

He only laughed at her.

I felt something cold against my sweating left hand and looked down to see what it was. It was Faro's nose. I had been so took up with what I saw through the crack in the door that I hadn't seen him come through the kitchen. I tried to push him away, but he began to bark.

Big Eli laughed. "Flush him out, Faro," I heard him call and I knew my game was up. I walked out on the porch.

"Why did you run away?" Big Eli asked me.

I set my jaw to keep from crying, for I knew I could never



tell him about the dream. Finally I asked, "Who slept in our bed last night?"

Big Eli looked puzzled. "A man from Texas," he said. "The tavern was full up and I brought him home after you went to sleep." He waited for me to say something and when I didn't, Hannah asked him, "Does the man from Texas crop his hair?"

Big Eli must have thought she was taunting him for his eyes flashed mad when he looked at her. But her face told him she wasn't and then he must have seen the light for he looked at me again and laughed big. "The man from Texas crops his hair," he said and laughed again. "Are you ready to go back now?"

I shook my head. "No," I said.

"You'd better let him stay with me a spell," Hannah said, and her voice was soft again and I felt she wasn't mad at Big Eli for what he had done.

"Come home when you're a'mind," said Big Eli and snapped his fingers at Faro. They started down the path the way they had come and Hannah and I stood on the porch and watched them until they were lost in the timber. I wanted to run after them and tell Big Eli about the dream but I had chewed my cud and I knew I had to swallow it.

## CHAPTER 16

Moses was still scolding from the sycamore and the potlicker was growling when Hannah and I finished the dishes and I wondered if Big Eli had changed his mind and come back for me. I saw a shadow in the square of sunlight that came through the kitchen door. I reached a hand out and touched Hannah and she wheeled and saw it, too. Then Stan Bodine stood there with the potlicker beside him. Hannah let go a short scream.

Bodine's face was covered by a scraggly beard and his riggin' was wrinkled and dirty. He looked at the two of us, grinned and came in.

"I see you've got company," he said to Hannah.

"Why did you come back?" she asked.

He only chuckled, husky and dry-throated.

"Ain't you aiming to kiss me?" he asked and moved a pace toward her, a grin spreading on his face.

She moved to put the table betwix them. He stopped short.

"You didn't seem to mind Eli Wakefield kissing you," he said and I knew he had seen it happen. She didn't try to deny it.

He looked at me. "What's this damned kid doing here?" he asked her.

"You let him be," she said and her eyes flashed.

The vittles had not been taken off the table and he got a plate and helped himself.

"You can sell the mules and the hogs tomorrow," he said. "I'll be needing the money before I go."

She looked scared. "You're not going to stay here, Stan," she said. "I've heard them prowling around at night looking for you."

"Looks like Eli Wakefield did most of the prowling since I've been gone," he said and laughed. "Maybe I'd better be on hand when he comes to get his young'un."

He turned and glared at me. "Get the hell out of here!" he yelled and I started for the door. "Wait!" he shouted and I stopped at the door.

"Don't go after your pappy," he said, "or I'll kill her."

I looked at Hannah to see what she wanted me to do.

"He means it, Little Eli," she said. "Stay in the yard."

I went outside and sat down on a chopping block in the back yard to think things over. I remembered seeing a pistol on the mantel over the kitchen fireplace and the rifle stacked next to the door and I wondered if they were loaded. The pistol was double-barreled and fired by cap. The rifle fired by flint and would need powder in the pan. I decided that in case of trouble I'd stand the best chance with the pistol, though I had never fired one.

Moses flew down from the sycamore and begged for something

to eat. I rolled the chopping block over and he scrambled for grubs and crickets. In a little while I looked up and saw Bodine staring at me from the doorway, a devilish grin on his face. He studied the crow for a spell, then stepped into the yard and came toward me at a slow shuffle. Hannah came to the door and watched him like she was afraid of what he was going to do.

Moses backed off and scolded when he saw Bodine. Crows don't like strangers and he had never seen Bodine before.

Bodine settled himself on the chopping block, picked up a dry chip and began whittling on it with his pocketknife. It must have been the same knife he sunk in Bob Morgan's heart.

"When's your pappy coming back for you?" he asked.

"He's not coming back," I said.

"It won't do you no good to lie," he said. "I'll be waiting for him when he gets here."

Hannah came up to us. "He's telling the truth, Stan," she said. "Why don't you let him alone?"

He kicked over a block and crickets began jumping. Moses forgot his fear of Bodine and started catching them. Bodine watched him like he had never seen it happen before.

"How long's this critter been here?" he asked without taking his eyes off Moses.

"He's the boy's pet," Hannah said. "He brought him here a spell back."

"Thought he acted like he'd been here a spell," Bodine said and picked up another whittling chip. He was silent for a while and then he said, "I once knew a feller who had a talking crow." He rustled a chuckle. "I'll wager this critter would have a lot to say if he could talk. He could tell me a lot of things. Like how many times Eli Wakefield has been here with my woman while I've been gone."

"I won't have the boy hear such talk!" Hannah said and put her hand on my shoulder. "I'll take him home!"

"No, you ain't," Bodine said and glared at her. "Nar one of you

leave until I'm gone!" He tossed the chip to the ground and fingered the edge of his blade with a stubby thumb.

A cricket hop-skipped across the ground with Moses after him. The cricket hid under the toe of Bodine's boot and Moses tried to peck him out. Bodine reached out a fat hand and grabbed Moses by the neck and the crow beat his wings and squalled to get free. It happened so quick I couldn't stop him.

"Let him go!" I yelled and rushed at Bodine. He shoved me aside with the hand that held the knife and began to laugh. I tried to beat him with my fists but Hannah grabbed and held me. She was afraid of that knife and what he would do with it.

"There's only one way to make a crow talk," Bodine said, "and that's to split his tongue." The thumb and forefinger closed tight on Moses' throat and I saw the beak pop open as he struggled for air. Hannah screamed and held on to me tighter as I tried to break free. Bodine's right hand moved quick with the knife and Moses squalled in pain.

"You devil!" Hannah screamed. "You devil!"

Bodine threw back his head and laughed, then flung Moses to the ground where he began to claw at his beak with his foot, but no sound came from him. I managed to break away from Hannah.

"I'll kill you!" I yelled at Bodine and ran for the kitchen door. Hannah guessed what I was going to do for she ran after me and Bodine was right behind her.

We both reached the fireplace at the same time but Hannah was taller and grabbed the pistol before I could lay hands to it. I tried to get it from her but she held it high and all the time saying, "No, Little Eli! No!"

"You little rat!" I heard Bodine bellow and turned to see him pick up the rifle by the barrel. He came in swinging it like a club. "I'll brain you!" he yelled. I ducked and the butt of the gun whizzed over my head. Before he could swing again, Hannah shoved me aside and pointed the pistol at Bodine.

"I'll shoot!" she said. There was killing in her eyes and in her voice. Bodine stopped to study her and the soggy grin came back.

"You she-devil," he growled, his voice husky and mean.

"I mean it, Bodine," she said. "I'll kill you if you touch him!"

"That ain't loaded," he said. "You can't bluff me."

She lowered the muzzle. "Don't make me prove it," she said.

His eyes fixed on the pistol and he moved one step toward her. I looked at Hannah to see what she was going to do about it. I could see she was trying to make up her mind. Bodine took another step and the gun roared and my ears buzzed like a nest of hornets. A splinter from the table spun in the air and fell at Bodine's feet.

"There's a load in the other barrel," she said. "Do you want it?"

He glared at her for a long moment. Then he lifted a powder horn from a peg beside the fireplace, and with the rifle cupped in his arm he stalked out. When he cleared the door he stopped and turned around to look at us.

"Don't try leaving the house. I'll be watching if you do."

Then he was gone and I heard his footsteps fade across the back yard. Hannah shut the door and dropped the wooden bar into place. Then she went to the front door and did the same. She put the pistol back on the mantel and slumped in a chair by the table. Then she sunk her head on her arms and cried.

## CHAPTER 17

AFTER a spell I went to the window and looked out. Moses was crouched against the chopping block and he was still clawing at his beak and shaking his head. I knew he was bad hurt. I lifted the crossbar from the door and Hannah jumped up and tried to stop me.

"He'll kill you!" she called to me but I got the door open and ran into the yard. Moses tried to get away but I picked him up.

"Hurry!" Hannah called from the kitchen door.

I raced into the kitchen and she slammed and barred the door behind me. "He's gone," I said.

She shook her head. "No, he's not," she said. "He's waiting out there somewhere. He thinks Big Eli will be back for you."

I put Moses on the hearth but he was too weak to stand and he sort of slumped over on one side with his wings spread out. She got an old shirt and we wrapped him up warm. Shortly after sundown Moses died and Hannah and I both cried a little.

"I wish I had shot him," she said, meaning Bodine, and sobbed on my shoulder.

"Somebody will," I said.

We didn't eat any supper that night and we didn't light a candle, either. She said Bodine might try to shoot through a window and kill me. When the Seth Thomas clock struck ten o'clock she said we should get some sleep.

She brought a rocking chair in the kitchen and spread a bear hide over it. "I'll sleep here," she said, "and you can sleep on the bed." She went into the next room and I heard her turning down the quilts and fluffing the tick. When she came back I was in the rocking chair.

"I'd rather sleep here," I said.

"If you fancy," she said. "If you hear anything, call me."

I said I would and she went in the next room. I settled down in the bear hide, but I knew I wasn't going to sleep. I wanted to think. Moses was lying dead on the hearth and Hannah and I were holed up in Stan Bodine's house like animals at bay and somewhere out there in the dark he was waiting with a muzzle-loader in case we tried to make a run for it. I could hear Hannah tossing about in her bed and after an hour I let on like I was snoring. It was soon after that her breathing got steady and she didn't move and I knew she was asleep at last.

I was certain I had seen a flicker of light through the kitchen window. I slipped out of the bear hide and looked again. I could see the faint glow of a smoldering fire 300 yards or more from

the house. Bodine must be drunk, I guessed, or he wouldn't have made a fire.

I knew the potlicker wasn't on the front porch or anywhere near because I would have heard her scratching fleas. She was with Bodine, I knew, and Moses wouldn't be able to sound a warning. I stood on tiptoe and got the pistol off the mantel and shoved it under my belt. Then I went to the back door in my sock feet. It seemed it took an hour to open the door without making a noise but I did it. The night air was chilly and the heavy dew soaked through my socks, but it muffled the dry leaves when I got into the timber. I stopped to rest because my heart was pounding like a sledge. The fire had died down and I could hardly make out Bodine squatted against the base of a tree. The jug was between his feet. I couldn't see the potlicker at all.

I knew I would have to get closer and I began to inch my way forward, feeling ahead with my hands for twigs and dry leaves that might give me away. I judged I was 50 yards from him



when I stopped again and lay flat on my belly until my breath steadied. I could see the dog then, curled up a yard from the coals. I knew I couldn't get any closer without fretting her.

Bodine's head bobbed in a doze. I drew the pistol from my belt and with both hands shaking I leveled it in a practice aim. Finally I got Bodine in the sights and I began to tighten my grip on the stock. Then, from far off somewhere, I seemed to hear Big Eli reciting Scripture like he used to before we came to The Purchase.

"Thou shalt not kill," his voice seemed to be saying over and over. I tried to shut my ears to it but I kept hearing him, "Thou shalt not kill." I tried to get Bodine in the sights again but my eyes were blurred. My hands began to shake and I was afraid my fingers would trip the trigger. I lowered the gun and laid it on the ground. I knew I couldn't do it.

Bodine reached over and chunked the fire and a small flame leaped up. A twig cracked somewhere and the potlicker woke up snarling. I saw Bodine ease his hand toward the muzzle-loader stacked against the tree and then I heard the roar of a gun and I saw the flash of it less than a hundred yards away. Bodine toppled forward on his face and lay still.

The potlicker snarled and dashed out of the rim of light and I heard a man crashing through the brush. I wondered if it was Big Eli. One thing was certain, whoever it was, neither he nor I could have got that close to Bodine if Moses had been alive. Bodine had plaited his own hang noose when he killed him.

Then I heard Hannah. "Eli! Eli!" she screamed as she ran toward me, guided by the dull glow of the fire. I picked up the pistol and went to where Bodine sprawled on the ground. When she got there she knelt over him and I helped her turn him over on his back. There was a big hole in his forehead and blood was oozing out of it. Hannah took the pistol out of my hand and without looking at it laid it on the ground next to Bodine's body.

"Why did you do it, Little Eli?" she said. "Why did you do it?"

Until I knew who killed him I didn't want her to know it



wasn't me who did it, so I said, "He begged his own chaw and chewed more than he begged."

She looked at Bodine and shuddered. Then she said, "I've got to take you home, Little Eli."

## CHAPTER 18

**N**EITHER OF US said much as we rode along on one of Bodine's mules. The more I thought about it the more certain I was that Big Eli or one of the Morgan men had done the killing. And yet I asked myself why should a Morgan run away after he did it? Big Eli would have a good reason. He wouldn't want Hannah to know he had killed her husband. But that would not have made any difference to Anse or Tully or Terry Morgan. They would have killed Stan Bodine and been proud to admit it, even to her. It must have been Big Eli, I decided, and if it was I didn't want Hannah to ever know it. I decided to stick to my story that I had shot Bodine. She already thought I did and she had good reasons for thinking so.

Breakfast smoke was rising from most of the chimneys in the village when we drew up in front of Uncle Zack's and slid off the mule. Faro didn't meet us and I wondered why. Uncle Zack heard us ride up and came to the door. His eyebrows popped up in surprise when he saw who it was.

"Come in," he said, and as we walked into the big room Aunt Soph came from the kitchen and she was so surprised to see Hannah that she almost dropped the skillet she held in her hand. They knew something was wrong.

"Where's Elias?" Uncle Zack said.

Before I could answer Aunt Soph said, "He's been gone the night. We thought he was looking for Little Eli."

Hannah said, "Squire, Bodine's been killed."

"Killed!" said Uncle Zack and stared at her. "Did Elias kill him?" he asked.

Hannah didn't answer but started to cry.

"I killed him," I said.

Aunt Soph clasped her hands and shut her eyes. "God have mercy," she said and she began to weep.

"Amen," said Uncle Zack. Then he put on his hat and went out, saying to Aunt Soph, "I'll get Doc Haney and send for the Sheriff."

In a few minutes people started coming in the house and I knew that Uncle Zack had lost no time in spreading the news. They didn't ask any questions but stood around and stared at me and Hannah. Miss Susie Spann came in and Aunt Soph met her. They put their arms around each other and Aunt Soph busted out crying again and Miss Susie was glaring over Aunt Soph's shoulder at Hannah.

Uncle Zack came back in a spell and Big Eli was with him. The Gabriel Horn was swinging from his shoulder and he stopped to hang it on the peg by the fireplace.

He came over and stood looking at me for a spell like he was trying to read my thoughts.

"Who killed Bodine, Little Eli?" he asked.

"I shot him," I said.

He looked at Hannah. "Did he?" he asked.

Hannah choked a cry and nodded her head. "Yes," she said.

Big Eli took a deep breath and set his mouth hard across his teeth. "You're a liar," he said, and then I was certain that he had done it himself.

Doc Haney came in carrying his little black bag of cures. "Where's the body?" he asked Hannah and she told him.

He turned to Uncle Zack and Big Eli. "We won't wait for the Sheriff," he said. "We'll go up there now."

Uncle Zack and Big Eli went to the stable to harness the mules and everybody else hurried out to get teams hitched, too.

Nobody in our wagon said anything, but Hannah cried most of the way and squeezed my hand until at times it hurt. Once or

twice I saw Big Eli looking at her like he wanted to choke the truth out of her and make her say that I hadn't done it. I wondered if he would tell Doc Haney and the Sheriff that he had done it, now he thought she was trying to put the blame on me. It gave me two reasons for sticking to my story. I knew there had been talk about Hannah and Big Eli coming to The Purchase together and about him going up alone to her place the night Bodine killed Bob Morgan. I didn't want people to think that he had killed Bodine because of Hannah or that she had killed Bodine because of Big Eli.

"Might as well hold the inquest now," Doc Haney said when we got to where Stan Bodine lay by the ashes of his fire.

He picked out six men in the crowd as jurors, then sat down on a stump. "Let's take testimony," he said, and motioned for me to stand before him.

"Why were you up here at Bodine's place?" he asked me. I hadn't thought he would ask that. I shook my head. "I won't tell you," I said.

Doc spat on the ground and cleared his throat. "Then tell what you want to tell, Son," he said.

I began at the part where Bodine sneaked in while Hannah and I were clearing the dishes. I told about Bodine's splitting Moses' tongue with his pocketknife and how I had run into the house to get the pistol to kill him but Hannah took it away from me. I didn't leave out anything except the part about seeing somebody else shoot Bodine.

"That'll be all, Son," said Doc and called for Hannah to testify. She told it just like I had done, only she put in the part where Big Eli had come after me and she had asked that he let me stay. I thought Aunt Soph's eyes would pop out when she heard that and she started clucking and patting her toe in the dirt. Miss Susie never looked at Big Eli when she heard it but she didn't take her eyes off Hannah. I wondered what she was thinking.

Big Eli reached down and picked up the pistol and began look-

ing at it like he wasn't interested in what Hannah was saying, or what Doc Haney was asking her.

When she told all there was to tell, including the part where she found me standing over Bodine with the pistol in my hand, Doc Haney asked her, "When did you marry Bodine?"

"The second night after I got to The Purchase," she said.

"Had you know'd him before?" Doc asked. She shook her head. "No," she said.

"That was mighty quick courtin', wasn't it?" Doc asked.

"I was scared they'd take me back to Cadiz," she said, "and Bodine said they couldn't if I'd marry him."

Doc Haney asked her to explain what she meant and she told how she had run away from Cadiz with Big Eli and me and how the innkeeper and a constable had come for her and she ran away from Uncle Zack's, too.

"I hid all night in the woods," she said, "and the next day I started walking. I got as far as Bodine's place here. He took me in and fed me and said I could stay in the house that night, as he had to go to Wadesboro anyway. He left, but around midnight he got back and he had a preacher with him. He told me the constable and the innkeeper were still looking for me and they'd take me back unless I married him. I was scared and said I would if he'd promise to pay off the indenture. He promised. Then the preacher wed us."

Big Eli was still fingering the pistol like he wasn't listening.

"What preacher was it?" Doc Haney asked.

"Bodine called him Zybee Fletcher," she said.

If somebody had hit me with a ham hock I wouldn't have been more surprised. Men began laughing and the women chattered and giggled like a bunch of jay birds.

Hannah looked at me and I thought she was going to start crying. Doc Haney yelled for order but he had to yell twice before things quieted down. Then he shook his head and looked at Hannah like he was sorry for her.

"Girl," he said, "you wasn't wed to Stan Bodine."

"But I was," she said. "I wouldn't lie to you."

"I know you wouldn't," said Doc, and he meant it, "but Zybee Fletcher ain't no preacher. He's a snake doctor."

I didn't think it was funny and neither did Big Eli, for his face got blazing red. All of a sudden he stood up and folks saw him and how mad he was and things quieted quick, for he was holding the pistol in his hand.

"Somebody's lying here, Doc," he said, and poked the pistol toward the coroner.

Doc Haney looked at the gun, saw it was butt first.

"Look at that gun," said Big Eli.

Doc did. "What about it?" he asked.

I knew then that Big Eli had caught up on the lie I had told about killing Bodine myself.

"According to their testimony," Big Eli said, "this gun was fired twice. Once by her and once by my son, Eli."

"Yes," said Doc, "that's the testimony."

"Then how is it that one barrel is still loaded?" asked Big Eli and he glared at Hannah.

Doc looked at the pistol, then he turned to Hannah again. "Was this pistol reloaded after you fired it into the table?" he asked.

"No," she said, "and Bodine took the powder horn with him when he left the house. It couldn't have been reloaded."

Everybody was craning their necks to hear what she said and trying to get a look at the gun. Doc Haney shoed them back to get breathing space.

I heard horses trotting up and saw Sheriff Conse Foster and Miss Susie Spann's brother, Jim. Nobody paid any attention as they dismounted and pushed through the crowd. The Sheriff looked around sort of perplexed. "What're you holding a hearing for, Doc?" he asked.

"To find out who killed Stan Bodine and why," said Doc.

"You're wasting your time and breath," said the Sheriff, and he pointed at Miss Susie's brother. "Jim Spann killed him."

That knocked the wind out of everybody, including me. All we did was stare at Miss Susie's brother while he stood looking at the hole in Stan Bodine's head. It was the first chance he had of seeing his handiwork and he didn't look like he was enjoying it, for his skin turned persimmon yellow.

"Why did he kill him?" Doc Haney asked the Sheriff.

"For the bounty," said the Sheriff.

Nobody said a word, but all looked at Jim Spann. He shifted from one foot to the other.

I wondered how he could kill a man for money, even a man like Stan Bodine. I had meant to kill Bodine and though I had a reason, I couldn't do it. Big Eli should have killed him that day they had the fight, but he didn't do it. Hannah could have killed him with reason but she fired into the kitchen table instead. But none of us would have done it for money. Folks backed away from Jim Spann.

## CHAPTER 19

IT DIDN'T take long and the jury's verdict was simple: "Deceased died from gunshot wound inflicted by one Jim Spann. Motive, bounty."

Doc Haney looked at the Sheriff. "You can pay the bounty, Sheriff." He got up and stretched his legs.

The women moved off toward the wagons and rigs. The men looked at each other, wondering what to do about Bodine's dead body. Big Eli came to Hannah.

"Where do you want him buried?" he asked her.

"He's got kin in the next county," she said. "I'll carry him there."

"You'd better get ready to travel," he said. "We'll take care of things here." He turned back to the men, and Hannah and I went

back to the house. While she was changing her dress I went into the kitchen. Moses was on the hearth where he died.

I picked him up and went outside and got a spade. The men were already sawing boards they had knocked off the stable shed to make a coffin for Stan Bodine. I dug a deep hole under the sycamore and dropped Moses in it, then raked the dirt over him and tapped it firm with my foot.

A little later some of the men put Bodine into the new-made coffin, covered him with a horse blanket and nailed on the lid. Then all hands lifted the box and we started up the rise.

Bodine's wagon with his two mules hitched to it was waiting in front of the house and they put the coffin in it. Nobody seemed to know what to do next.

"I'll stay and see she gets off," Big Eli said to Uncle Zack and the other men. "Little Eli will be with me."

That satisfied everybody. They began climbing in their rigs and wagons and on horses. Uncle Zack's wagon moved off and the others followed.

When the sound of the last wagon had faded out Hannah came on the porch, carrying the same carpetbag she had brought that first night from Cadiz. She was wearing a plain gray dress and a blue cape that almost touched the floor, and she had covered her small hat with a veil which was knotted under her chin, but through it I could see that her eyes were red and swollen. Big Eli picked up the bag.

"I'm sorry for what I said," he said to her, holding his hat in his free hand.

"I hold no vex," she said.

"You shouldn't go alone," he said. "We'll ride along, if you pleasure."

She shook her head. "His kin knows you put up bounty," she said. "I know the way."

"What about the stock here?" he asked.

"Turn them out to forage," she said, and stepped into the yard.

We followed her to the wagon. Big Eli dropped the bag beside the coffin and began unwinding the reins from the whipstock. Hannah bent down and hugged and kissed me.

"I'm glad you didn't kill him," she said, and her lips trembled. Then she stood up straight again and Big Eli took her hand and histed her into the wagon seat. He handed her the reins and the mules moved off at a swinging gait.

Hannah looked small, sitting so straight and prim in the seat of the big wagon, but by the way she handled the reins I knew she wasn't afraid of the team. I wondered what she would think about on the long trip to the next county and how Bodine's kin would treat her when she drove up in a wagon with a coffin and him in it.

## CHAPTER 20

TORCHES of fat pine were burning in front of the tavern and as we got near I could see a crowd of men standing around listening to a man talk. He was a thin man with a fancy vest trimmed along the edge with yellow velvet and spangles of gold and silver. Around his waist he wore a broad yellow sash, knotted on the left side with the ends swinging almost to the ground. The butts of two fancy pistols poked out from under the sash. Somebody told us his name was Pleasant Tuesday Babson.

"It's Spanish country," he was saying. "It's not like country you ever saw before. You don't measure it by rod and chain in Texas. You measure it by the eye, and as far as the eye can see, and when your eye can see no farther there's where you drive your stakes."

Pleasant Tuesday told how a man named Moses Austin rode into Texas on a mule with a black slave following him on foot.

"He rode right up to the Governor's palace," he said, "and asked for a grant of land to start a colony of Americans. The Governor listened to Moses Austin and knew him to be a wise



man of great vision and he rewarded him with what he wanted. He gave him a tract of land so big it can only be spanned by the hand of God. Today, men and women just like you folks are moving into Texas behind old Moses Austin just as the children of Israel followed the first Moses into the Promised Land."

Then Pleasant Tuesday told why he had come to Humility. He was getting up a party to join Moses Austin's colony. He said the party would go by steamboat to New Orleans and from there by wagons and horseback to Texas.

"There's no wilderness to clear before a plowshare can be shoved into Texas ground," he said, "and the rifle ball's not been made that can carry to a neighbor's line."

He told about the abundance of game and when he said: "Mine own eyes have watched a sea of buffalo take from sunup to sundown to pass," people looked at each other like they thought Pleasant Tuesday might be topping cotton.

After he got through talking, people crowded around him and asked questions. Big Eli and I listened a while longer and then we went home. I couldn't go smack to sleep, because so many things had happened and I kept thinking about them. Big Eli must have been thinking about them, too, because he kept threshing around like a shoat in a sack long after he climbed into bed.

I thought when things quieted down we would start work on our house again, but we didn't. Big Eli wasn't in the mind for it. For two days we roamed the hills and hunted. It was like before we came to The Purchase, only Big Eli didn't sing when we built a fire and camped for the night. He only shot such game as the two of us needed to eat, and at night we listened to Faro run foxes through the draws and in the canebrakes along the river. And then one night Big Eli did something he hadn't done since we came to The Purchase. He got down on his knees by the fire and prayed. I bowed my head and listened.

"Oh God, give me wisdom," he prayed, "that I may do Thy will. Shed Thy good light on my troubled path that I may not stray

into the byways of fools and, like a steer in a swamp, bog down in the quagmire of my own folly."

Big Eli's prayer meant that he was afraid. He had never been afraid of anything before, and I wondered what it was. It made me afraid, too.

He said "Amen," chunked up the fire and we crawled under the bear hide and went to sleep. The next morning we headed back to Uncle Zack's.

Aunt Soph and Uncle Zack saw us coming and they were mighty solemn of face when we walked in. Aunt Soph put her fingers to her lips and pointed to the closed door that opened into their bedroom.

"Miss Susie," she whispered. "She's asleep."

Big Eli looked at her in wonderment and Uncle Zack motioned for us to follow them into the kitchen.

"She had trouble with her brother," said Aunt Soph in a low voice. "She had no other place to go, except here."

"What was the trouble betwix them?" Big Eli asked.

"The bounty," Uncle Zack said.

"She told him it was a sin to kill a man for bounty," Aunt Soph said. "Even Bodine."

"He told her it was no worse to earn a bounty than to offer one," said Uncle Zack. "He meant you, Elias."

About an hour later Miss Susie got up. She tried to be pleasant when she saw us and Uncle Zack tried to help her out.

"The bay window came yesterday," he said. "It's just the kind Miss Susie likes, isn't it, Miss Susie?"

Miss Susie said it was. Her eyes were red and I knew she had been crying. In my mind's eye, I couldn't see Miss Susie crying. She was the kind of woman who could smile but not laugh. She could frown but not scold, so I never knew for certain what she thought. It wasn't like her to weep.

Aunt Soph and Uncle Zack got busy with house chores and sent me to the store on an errand. That left Miss Susie and Big Eli

by themselves. I don't know what they talked about, but the next day we went to work on the new house again. While we worked, Faro chased rabbits until he tuckered out and came in to pant in the shade of a tulip tree. The sun was noon high and we were about to knock off and eat when I saw a man riding up the trail on a mule. Big Eli howdied him and asked if he wouldn't share our vittles, but the man said he reckoned he wasn't hungry. He slid to the ground and looked at Faro. "Good dog you've got."

Big Eli agreed.

"I've heard him of a night," the man said, meaning he had listened to Faro run foxes.

Big Eli didn't say anything and the man squatted on his hunkers and snapped his finger at Faro. "Let's take a look at you, dog," he said.

Big Eli stanced him and the man went over Faro with his hands, feeling the loose mouth and the broad chest. He turned to Big Eli and asked, "How much would you take for him?"

"What's your bid?" Big Eli asked and I couldn't believe I had heard him right. The man named a price.

"Fair enough," said Big Eli, and the man reached into his jeans. Big Eli said, "But not today."

The man looked puzzled. "When?" he asked.

"I won't have need for him after Saturday week," he told the man. "You can get him then."

That satisfied the man and he climbed on his mule and rode off.

Big Eli laid out the vittles, but he didn't touch them.

"Pitch in," he said to me.

I shook my head. "I'm not hungry," I said and walked away because tears were coming to my eyes. I couldn't remember the time when we hadn't had Faro. I had often wondered how it would be when he got old and died, but I had never thought that someday Big Eli might sell him. But I knew why he was doing it now. Miss Susie Spann didn't like hunting men.

That night at supper, Miss Susie looked at me and smiled. "Little Eli," she said, "do you want to know a secret?"

"I know it already," I said. "Big Eli and you get wed, come Sunday week."

She looked at Big Eli, her eyes wide. "Did he tell you?" she asked.

"No," I said. "But he told the man to come for Faro on Saturday."

## CHAPTER 21

UNCLE ZACK and Aunt Soph didn't lose any time spreading the news. Everywhere Big Eli went folks shook his hand and told him what a good woman he was getting. Aunt Soph and the blacksmith's wife got busy helping Miss Susie sew her wedding finery and Big Eli went all the way to Paris, down in Tennessee, to buy a ring. "Pure gold," he said when he showed the ring to Uncle Zack and Aunt Soph. "It won't rub off."

During the rest of the week Big Eli and I worked at the new house by day and he spent much time of an evening walking in the woods with Miss Susie. Aunt Soph's cupboard was getting filled with cakes and pies for the wedding party. Uncle Zack bought a keg of wine that had foreign words burned in the wood.

Saturday morning they let me sleep late. After I had my breakfast I scraped up some scraps and went to the back door and called Faro, but he didn't come. I looked at Big Eli.

"The man came for him early," he said.

Big Eli got his hat and went to the stables and saddled the mule. He left him standing in the yard and came into the house and got the rifle and the Gabriel Horn. "Let's go," he said to me.

He climbed in the saddle and pulled me up behind him and with the rifle across the pommel of the saddle we jogged off down the road for our last day of work on the new house.

Along about the middle of the afternoon we saw two wagons

going toward the river and when they got there men, women and children piled out and began unloading trunks, carpetbags and other truck. After the wagons were unloaded, they turned back toward Humility. Men began building a fire for the women to cook on. Then I saw Pleasant Tuesday Babson and I knew it was his party of pilgrims he was taking to Texas. He must have seen Big Eli and me for after a spell he came up the path from the river. "Good house," he said, looking it over. "When do you move in?"

"The wedding's tomorrow," Big Eli said. "We move in right after."

"Sorry to miss it," Pleasant Tuesday said, "but the steamboat'll be coming by daybreak."

"I'd admire to have you," Big Eli said. "I took a hankering to you."

"I reckon I did to you, too, Wakefield," he said. "I'll be in need of a good hunter, once we leave Louisiana."

Big Eli didn't say anything.

Pleasant Tuesday looked at me. "You're going to be a big man when you grow up, son," he said. "You'll need space to breathe in. Come to Texas when your daddy weans you."

I grinned at him.

He shook hands with us and turned down the path to the landing.

Big Eli picked up his rifle. "We'll eat here tonight," he said. "You feed the mule and I'll go for squirrels."

He disappeared in the woods and soon I heard two shots. Two others followed in a spell and then he came in with four squirrels. While he skinned and cleaned them I got a fire started in the fire-place. We roasted the squirrels on a spit stick and washed them down with spring water while outside it got dark and the folks at the landing started singing around their campfire.

After we ate Big Eli sat staring into the fire and I knew he was thinking of something he wanted to say but wasn't ready to say

it. Finally he shoved a peg-leg stool my way and said, "Sit down, Little Eli. I want to talk to you."

I sat down.

"Little Eli," he started off like it was hard to find the right words, "you and I have been going where we pleased and doing what we pleased all of your life. We've had a good time and we never accounted to anybody for what we did or where we went."

"Until we came to The Purchase," I said.

He cleared his throat. "Tomorrow, I'm taking myself a wife and you're getting a mother," he said. "From now on we have to take her into account. We've got to do some of the things she wants us to do, though we may not like to do it."

"Like selling Faro," I said.

He nodded his head. "Yes," he said. "Miss Susie don't hanker hunting men. I had to sell him. Now I've got to get shed of something else. I can't do it myself, so I want you to help me out."

He got up from the hearth and reached for the Gabriel Horn. For a few seconds he stood with it in his hands while the light from the fire played color on it. Big Eli loved the Gabriel Horn.

He handed it to me. "Take it in the hills somewhere so I won't ever find it," he said. "Dig a hole and bury it so nobody else will ever find it. And when you do that, Little Eli, make a vow never to tell anybody where you buried it."

I was too choked up to answer and I guess he was, too, for he hurried around and got a spade and lit the lantern. I slipped the thong of the Gabriel Horn over my shoulder, took the spade and the lantern, and stepped out into the dark. But the moon was just coming up over the distant ridges and I headed for them.

I didn't hurry for I had plenty on my mind, things I didn't understand. Big Eli mostly. I had seen him whip the gamblers on the steamboat and I saw him whip Stan Bodine, a big man, within an inch of eternity. Big Eli wasn't afraid of men.

Yet Uncle Zack, a puny man, had whipped him. Mostly he had done it with money. Big Eli couldn't fight with money. The

coach driver on the Cadiz toll road had whipped him. Zybee Fletcher, the snake doctor, had whipped him. They had outsmarted him. Big Eli trusted people. He couldn't fight their way.

Miss Susie Spann had whipped him worst of all. She hadn't cut his hair, like I dreamed she did, but she had whipped him just the same. She had whipped him into the kind of man she wanted him to be and that wasn't the kind of man God made Big Eli to be. And when she whipped Big Eli she had whipped Hannah Bolen, too, and I wondered if that was why, after all, she had whipped Big Eli and changed him—so that Hannah wouldn't have him.

A steamboat moaned up the river before I got to the ridge I had in mind. Big Eli and I had spread the bear hide there on many a night and listened to Faro bay up and down the draws and more than once we had slept the night there under the stars. I knew Big Eli wouldn't be coming there again.

I put down the lantern and laid the Gabriel Horn next to it; then I slid the point of the spade under the top sod and dug a deep hole. Then I picked up the Gabriel Horn but I didn't put it in the hole. I looked at it in the light of the lantern and the moon and I let my fingers slide along it like Big Eli had done before he handed it to me. It was smooth and curved like Hannah's arms.

It came to me that I had never blown the Gabriel Horn and I began to wonder if I had grown up to it and had a man's wind.

I slid my wet tongue along my lips and drew them tight across my teeth like I had seen Big Eli do and then I raised the black tip of the Gabriel Horn to them. I sucked the chilly night air into my chest and let it fill my cheeks until they stuck out like a squirrel toting hickory nuts. When I could hold no more I pushed slow but with all my might and the air was filled with the music of it, sweet as a woman's song.

I felt the thin walls of the Gabriel Horn tremble as the pitch, high and sharp at first, trailed off deep into its own echo coming



back from the far ridges. When they died away I was shaking all over, just knowing I had blown the Gabriel Horn and that I had a man's wind.

I had never felt that way before and I got warm all over and yet the sweat that ran down my neck was cold. The thought came to me that if I had a man's wind I was a man, and if I was a man I didn't need a mother even if Big Eli needed a wife. I thought of Hannah and saw myself lifting her in my arms and putting her in Uncle Zack's rig and taking her away somewhere.

Lights flickered on the surface of the river far below me and I could make out the steamboat. It broke the spell.

I knew I couldn't do what I had just seen in my mind's eye. I wasn't a man. I was still a boy, just turned ten. I sat down by the lantern and buried my face in my arms and cried. I don't know how long I sat there. I kept thinking about being a boy and not a man, and about Miss Susie's being my mother and I didn't want her to be.



It was then I heard something threshing through the hazel thickets below me and I remembered that Big Eli and I had seen the tracks of a cinnamon bear near there only a month before. He had told me that a cinnamon bear wouldn't attack a man, but I wasn't a man. I was a boy, and I was scared. I put out the lantern and edged into a thicket; then on my hands and knees I crawled as far as I could. I stopped to listen. I heard it ripping through the short brush where I had dug the hole to bury the Gabriel Horn and my heart slowed down a little. But soon it turned back and I knew it was following my trail. I still held the Gabriel Horn in my hand and I gripped the small end to use it as a club, but I was so pinned in I couldn't have swung it hard enough to hurt anything.

I felt a hot breath on my face and a long wet tongue began lapping my face like he was slobbering me up to make me easier to swallow. I was so scared I couldn't yell, but I put up my hand to shove it away. Then I felt the long floppy ears and I felt foolish and happy, wild happy. It was Faro and around his neck was a twist of rope. Somewhere, far off, he had heard the Gabriel Horn and come to me. I put my arms around his neck and buried my face against him while he whined and kept licking my hands.

In the distance I heard the ringing of bells and two sharp blasts from the steamboat's whistle. It was pushing in to the landing to carry Pleasant Tuesday Babson and his pilgrims to the promised land of Texas. I had run away before and Big Eli had found me. But he had Faro with him when he did it. He didn't have him now. The steamboat would be long gone before he missed me and I wondered if, in the hustle and bustle of the pilgrims' getting aboard, I could stow away. A boy might do it where a man couldn't, even if the boy had a dog. We headed for the river.

## CHAPTER 22

As I neared the landing, flames and smoke were pouring out of the stack of the steamboat and the wind, catching the sparks, dropped them into the river where they spit and sizzled. I doubled my pace for I knew the roustabouts were firing up to shove off. The pilgrims were standing in a group on deck and I heard loud voices, but I paid no heed because I wanted to get aboard without being seen by Pleasant Tuesday Babson.

I saw a roustabout, staggering under his load of wood, sway up the landing plank. Faro and I made a dash and went aboard behind him. We skirted the boiler and hid between two rows of stacked firewood where we couldn't be seen. We had just settled down when the loud voices of the pilgrims came through the sizzling steam and they seemed het up about something. Still holding to Faro, I moved down two rows of firewood to listen.

"She ain't a fitten person to be amongst us," I heard a woman say, and I reckoned she was talking to Pleasant Tuesday.

"You put her ashore or we will," I heard a man with a high voice say and the crowd seemed to agree with him.

The glare of the fire pits showed me everything there was to see, only I could hardly believe it. Standing back from the crowd and facing it was Pleasant Tuesday and beside him was Hannah Bolen. He had the fingers of both hands shoved under the bright yellow sash about his waist where the firelight glittered on the pearl and silver stocks of his fancy pistols. Hannah's arms were folded over her chest and there was a sort of smile on her face as she looked at the pilgrims crowded about the deck. I knew it was her the pilgrims had been talking about. But she wasn't scared like that time Doc Haney asked her questions after Stan Bodine was killed, or like the night the Constable and Old Decker came to get her. It seemed to me, as I watched her looking at the pilgrims, that she was daring them to try and put her off.

"What're you going to do about her, Babson?" a man with his wife and two little girls beside him shouted at Pleasant Tuesday.

"I'll abide by her decide," Pleasant Tuesday said and looked at Hannah for her answer.

"God knows I've went by the best light I had," Hannah said, "and I'm staying aboard."

Pleasant Tuesday didn't say a word. He swung around and called to two roustabouts, "Pull in the plank."

The captain must have been watching from the upper deck, for bells began clanging and the whistle shook the night air. I felt the boat shudder as the paddle wheel began to turn and churn the river into muddy foam.

Pleasant Tuesday and Hannah were still standing side by side facing the pilgrims. His hands were still close to the fancy pistols. Women were looking at their menfolks like they expected them to do something and men were looking at each other like they were pondering which one would do it. I don't know if it was the fancy pistols tucked under the yellow sash, or Pleasant Tuesday himself they were afraid of, but nobody did anything.

Then I saw that the boat hadn't moved and I remembered that Big Eli had warned Uncle Zack that the water was too shallow and the bed of the river too sloping for a good landing.

"A loaded boat'll founder at low stage," he had told Uncle Zack, but Uncle Zack had gone ahead with making it a landing anyway. Now it had happened. The boat was stuck in the mud. I thought of Big Eli and wondered if we'd be free before he would come to the landing looking for Faro and me.

I was still wondering what I was going to do when there came a crash that seemed to split my ears and something whined over my head like a hant. I was knocked flat on the deck between the racks of wood and before I could get to my feet steam was whistling out of the boiler in a great white cloud that shut out everything but the red glare of the fire pits. I heard the pilgrims, men, women and children, screaming and carrying on. I looked

around for Faro but he was gone. I hadn't heard him yelp and reckoned he wasn't hurt but just had the hair scared off him.

"Ca'm down, dammit, ca'm down!" the captain was yelling at the pilgrims from the second deck. "We blew a valve is all!"

I remembered Hannah and groped through the steam toward where she had been standing with Pleasant Tuesday. A shift in the wind lifted the steam from the deck again and I saw her on her knees bending over somebody. It was Pleasant Tuesday and he had a deep gash in his head and I couldn't see his face for blood. A piece of metal as big as my hand lay beside him and I reckoned that's what had hit him. Hannah glanced around when I stepped beside her. "Where's Big Eli?" she asked.

"I don't know," I said, being too scared to say anything else.

She looked at the Gabriel Horn which was slung over my shoulder, then at me again. "What're you doing here?" she asked.

"I'm going to Texas," I said.

For a second or so she didn't say anything but just looked at me. "We're both a far piece from being there now, Little Eli," she said and turned back to Pleasant Tuesday.

The pilgrims were crowding about us and women and young'uns were weeping and putting up an awful ruckus. The captain came down and slid his hand under Pleasant Tuesday's shirt. Hannah said, "He's dead."

The captain nodded. "We'll bury him come sunup," he said, and called to the roustabouts to get spades and go ashore to dig the grave. Hannah folded Pleasant Tuesday's hands across his chest and put his hat over his bloody face. A girl of 14 was having a convulsion and her eyes were bulging like a bullfrog's while her folks held her down on the deck and tried to put a spoon between her teeth to keep her from biting off her tongue. Hannah went to them. The woman said, "It's a fit. She's had 'em before."

"Let go of her," Hannah said, and I knew she was vexed.

The man and his wife looked at Hannah and obeyed. The girl got to her feet and Hannah took her in her arms.

I went to look for Faro, but I couldn't find him on the boat. Back from the river a hundred yards or more a lantern glowed and I heard spades striking the earth as the roustabouts hefted the sod for Pleasant Tuesday's grave. I liked Pleasant Tuesday and, in my mind, burying him without even a box wasn't a fitten way to put him under. Of a sudden I didn't want to go to Texas without him and I didn't want Hannah to go, either. I wanted to go back to Big Eli and I wanted her to go, too, but I knew we couldn't. There was no place to go and I felt heart-heavy.

I heard one of the men say, "Texas is Spanish country and nary one of us has been there."

"Without him, they'll run us out," said another. I knew they were speaking of Pleasant Tuesday and maybe they were feeling the same as I felt and didn't want to go to Texas without him.

"I'm for unloading our plunder here and now," said a woman, and most of the other women agreed with her.

"Make up your minds," the captain said. "When we've buried Babson and fixed the valve, I'm shovin' into the stream."

The pilgrims looked from one to the other, hoping somebody amongst them would make up their minds for them. Their faces looked as tired and weary as I felt and I saw some of the women crying, like they didn't want to go back and yet they had no place to go, either. I wanted to ask Hannah what she was going to do, but before I had the chance I felt a warm hand brush my shoulder and rest light on it and somebody pushed between Hannah and me. I looked up to see who it was. It was Big Eli and Faro was at his heels. My knees began to shake, not from fear but because of a sudden I felt as light as a dove feather and I knew I must have been totin' a heavy load and the sight of Big Eli had lifted it off my heart.

His long fingers pressed into my flesh like they had found something they never wanted to let go of again and tears came in my eyes, but not from pain. Big Eli looked down at Pleasant Tuesday, studied him for a spell, and his right hand reached up

for the keelboater's beaver which he tucked under his arm. He must have heard enough of the pilgrims' palaver to know what the trouble was, but the sight of Hannah and me pondered him and then a strange smile crossed his face when he saw the Gabriel Horn swinging from my shoulder. I knew then that he knew I had run away and why I had. He looked at the pilgrims who were still wrangling about getting off the boat.

"If you're a'mind to listen," he said to them, "I'd admire to speak." The pilgrims turned toward him and quieted down.

"I'm going to Texas," he said.

A man in the crowd said, "Wakefield, you ain't never been to Texas."

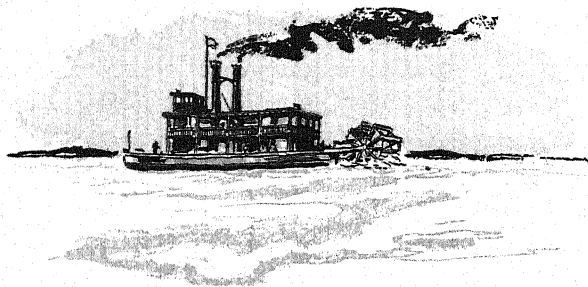
Big Eli nodded. "I ain't never been to Heaven," he said, "but I hope to fetch up there."

"Amen," said an old woman. "I reckon we all do."

The pilgrims nodded their heads.

A woman stepped up and looked at Big Eli with a sly grin. "Wakefield," she said, "I thought this was your weddin' day?"

Big Eli slipped his right arm around Hannah Bolen and drew her to him tight and firm. "I'm aimin' for it to be my weddin' day, ma'am," he said, "if I can find a preacher or a squire when the boat lands down-river at Pekin."



*Felix Holt*



BOTH OF Felix Holt's grandfathers went into Kentucky to settle when "The Purchase" was opened up, and both raised big families there. The author himself was born in Calloway County, the heart of the country he describes so vividly in *The Gabriel Horn*. Roaming the hills as a boy, after country school had let out, he came to know the region intimately; its history is in his bones. While he has not lived in Kentucky for some years, Holt goes back annually for a long visit. He makes a special effort to get in some fox hunting on each trip.

*The Gabriel Horn* is his first novel, crowning years of writing for radio and television, and, before that, reporting and editing in Chicago, Detroit and the Mexico of Pancho Villa's day. Now a resident of Bucks County, Pennsylvania, Holt sums up his varied activities with a statement reminiscent of Big Eli: "It has all been right memorable."

THIS condensation of *Duveen* is illustrated with full-color reproductions of ten of the world's most celebrated paintings, selected from the many masterpieces which figured prominently in the life of the famous art dealer. For making this added feature possible, the editors acknowledge with thanks the coöperation of the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D. C., the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City, and the Henry E. Huntington Library and Art Gallery, San Marino, California.

*Portrait of Duveen*  
*by Karl Godwin*



# Duveen



*A condensation of the book by*

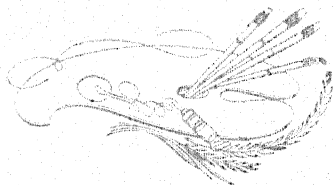
S. N. BEHRMAN

*"Duveen," copyright 1951, 1952 by S. N. Behrman, is published at \$3.50  
by Random House, Inc., 457 Madison Ave., New York 22, N. Y.  
The contents of this book appeared originally as a series of articles in The New Yorker.  
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1952, by The Reader's Digest Association, Inc.*

JOSEPH DUVEEN, art dealer extraordinary and "the greatest salesman of his time," was one of the most colorful personalities of that dazzling era when art-conscious American tycoons were coolly buying Old Masters for \$300,000 apiece and up. Though Duveen's highhanded ways often infuriated even his best customers, he persuaded some of America's wealthiest men to buy millions of dollars' worth of great paintings and then bequeath them to public museums where everyone could enjoy them.

Duveen's boldly ingenious methods, the intimate inside stories of the art world, and the dramatic tale of his family's rise from a Dutch blacksmith's shop to the British peerage—all these have combined to make S. N. Behrman's *Duveen* one of the most absorbing and widely discussed books of 1952.

THE COMMENTS opposite the full-color reproductions in *Duveen* are by Thomas Craven, probably the best-known American writer on art. Born in Salina, Kan., Craven taught Greek and Latin before he went to Paris to try his own hand at painting. In the past 30 years he has written almost a dozen books, including the best-selling *Men of Art*, *A Treasury of Art Masterpieces*, and the recent *Pocket Book of Greek Art*. His ambition is, in his own words, "to take art out of the hands of the specialists and make it acceptable to mankind in general."





EARLY in life, Joseph Duveen, the most spectacular art dealer of all time, noticed that Europe had plenty of art and America had plenty of money, and his entire astonishing career was the product of that simple observation.

In his five decades of selling in this country, Duveen — who became Lord Duveen of Millbank before he died in 1939, at the age of 69 — transformed American taste in art. The masterpieces he brought here have fetched up in a number of museums that, simply because they contain these masterpieces, rank among the greatest in the world. It has been stated by the eminent scholar Dr. Alfred M. Frankfurter, editor of the *Art News*, that 75 percent of the best Italian pictures in America came here through Duveen. He made it possible for the American people to see a large share of the world's most beautiful art without having to go abroad. In England, Sir Osbert Sitwell has said, "We have the galleries now, but no pictures to hang in them. He was the greatest salesman of his time."

There was almost nothing Duveen wouldn't do for his important clients. Immensely rich Americans, shy and suspicious because of their wealth, often didn't know where to go or what to do with themselves when they were abroad. Duveen provided entree to the great country homes of the nobility: by coincidence, their noble owners often had ancestral portraits to sell. He wangled hotel accommodations and passages on sold-out ships. He got his clients houses, or provided architects, and then saw to it that the architects planned the interiors with wall space that demanded plenty of pictures. He even selected brides or bridegrooms for some clients. These selections had to meet the same standard

that governed his choice of houses — a receptivity to expensive art.

Duveen permitted the great New York banker and collector, Jules Bache, to store supplies of his favorite cigars in the vaults of the Duveen establishments in London and Paris. One day, as Bache was leaving his hotel in Paris for his boat train, he realized that he didn't have enough cigars to last him for the Atlantic crossing. He made a quick detour to Duveen's to replenish. While Bache was waiting for the cigars to appear, Duveen's assistant, Bertram Boggis, showed him a Van Dyck and told him Duveen had earmarked it for him. Bache was so entranced with the picture that he bought it on the spot and almost forgot about the cigars; he finally went off to the train with both. There was no charge for storing the cigars, but the Van Dyck cost him \$275,000.

Except in matters of salesmanship, Duveen was not a patient man. He had a convulsive drive, a boundless fervor, especially for a picture he had just bought, and a reckless contempt for works of art handled by rival dealers. On one occasion, a millionaire collector who was thinking of buying a 16th-century Italian painting from another dealer asked Duveen to his mansion on Fifth Avenue to look at it. The prospective buyer watched Duveen's face closely and saw his nostrils quiver. "I sniff fresh paint," said Duveen sorrowfully. His remarks about other people's pictures sometimes resulted in lawsuits that lasted for years and cost him hundreds of thousands of dollars.

It was one of the crosses Duveen had to bear that the temperaments of the men he dealt with in this country were the direct opposite of his own. The great American millionaires of the Duveen Era were cautious and secretive. They had trained themselves to talk slowly, pausing before each verb, in order to keep themselves from sliding into commitment. For a man like Duveen, who was congenitally unable to keep quiet, the necessity of dealing constantly with cryptic bankers and industrial leaders like the elder J. P. Morgan, Henry Clay Frick and Andrew Mellon was ulcerating. He would read a letter from one of his important

clients 20 times, pondering each evasive sentence. "What does he mean by that?" he would ask his secretary. "Is he interested in the picture or isn't he?"

For a great many years, Duveen's secretary was an Englishman named H. W. Morgan. One of Morgan's duties was now and then to impersonate Andrew Mellon. The day before a scheduled interview with any of his important clients, Duveen would go to bed to map out the strategic possibilities. But before such an interview with Mellon, Duveen would, in addition to going to bed, rehearse with Morgan. Mellon was particularly hard to deal with because he was supremely inscrutable. "Now, Morgan, you are Mellon," Duveen would say, "Now, you go out and come in." Morgan would come in as Mellon, and Duveen would pepper him with questions; Morgan would try to put himself into Mellon's inscrutable state of mind and answer without saying anything.

Duveen sometimes came home from a talk with Mellon so upset by Mellon's doubts that he had to go back to bed, but there were never any doubts in his own mind. Each picture he had to sell was the greatest since the last one and until the next one. How could these men thwart their itch to own these magnificent works because of a mere matter of price? They could replace the money many times over, but they were acquiring the irreplaceable when they bought a Duveen. (When a Titian or a Raphael passed from Duveen into the hands of Joseph E. Widener or Benjamin Altman or Samuel H. Kress, it became a Widener or an Altman or a Kress, but until then it was a Duveen.) Still, while coping with their doubts, Duveen solidified his own convictions—and then charged them extra for the trouble he had taken doing it.

Whenever Duveen was in Europe, he received daily reports from his galleries in New York and London telling what customers or nibblers had come in, what pictures they had looked at and for how long, what they had said, and so on. From other sources he got reports on any major collections being offered for sale and photographs of their treasures. There were also reports

from his "runners"—agents deployed all over Europe to hunt out noblemen on the verge of selling some of their family portraits. In negotiating with the heads of noble families, Duveen usually won hands down over other dealers. He didn't waste his time and theirs on art patter (he reserved that for his American clients); he talked prices. He would say, "Greatest thing I ever saw! Will pay the biggest price *you* ever saw!" To this technique the dukes and barons responded warmly.

IN PARIS, Duveen often got frantic letters from his comptroller in New York imploring him, to stop buying. Duveen, who was never as elated by a sale as he was by a purchase, usually laid out over a million dollars on his annual trip abroad, and occasionally three or four times that sum. It was always his principle to pay the highest conceivable prices, and he usually succeeded.

A titled Englishwoman had a family portrait to sell. Duveen asked her what she wanted for it. Meekly, she mentioned 18,000 pounds. Duveen was indignant. "What?" he cried. "Eighteen thousand pounds for a picture of this quality? Ridiculous, my dear

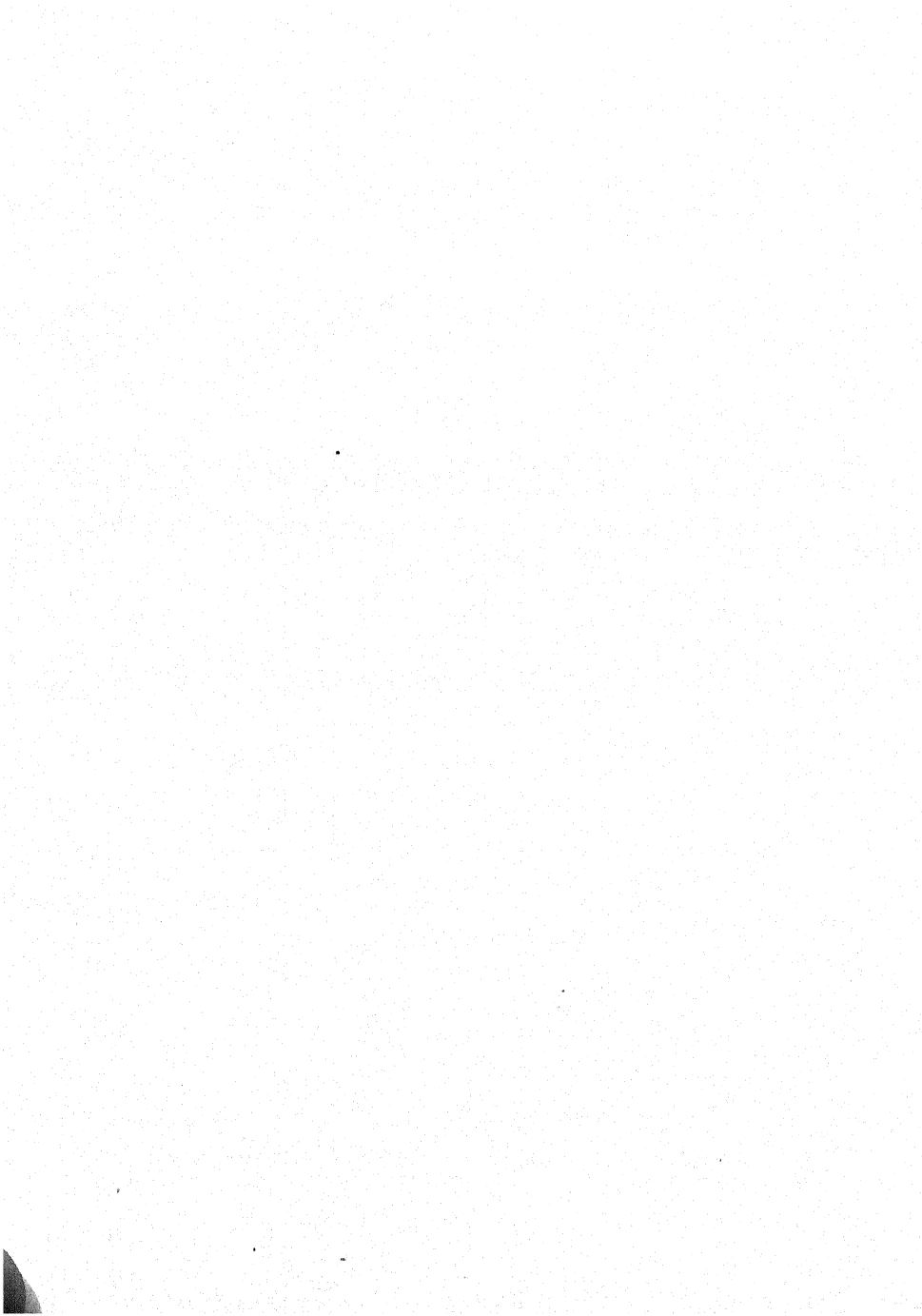
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### *Portrait of a Lady with an Ostrich-Feather Fan*

REMBRANDT VAN RIJN (1606-1669), Dutch School  
Courtesy of the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D. C.  
(*Widener Collection*)

THE lady with the feather is one of the indisputably great portraits of the world. Long ago, when the picture passed into the collection of Prince Youssoupoff, at Leningrad, it bore the title *Magdalene Van Loo, Wife of Titus*. (Titus was Rembrandt's only son.) The study was executed about 1667, in the period of the artist's final style, after he had been sold down the canals of Amsterdam into bankruptcy and ruin. It is quite possible that the language of paint is incapable of further expansion than Rembrandt has here given it; that it is not within man's capacities to achieve a greater feeling of weight and sculptural reality; or with the use of light and dark tones, to reveal more eloquently the spirituality of a chosen human being.







lady! Ridiculous!" He began to extol the virtues of the picture, as if he were selling it—as, indeed, he already was in his mind—instead of buying it. Finally, the owner asked him what he thought the picture was worth. Duveen, who had already decided what he would charge some American customer—a price he could not ask for a picture that had cost him a mere £18,000—shouted reproachfully at her, "My dear lady, the very least you should let that picture go for is £25,000!" Swept off her feet by his enthusiasm, the lady capitulated.

Duveen had enormous respect for the prices he set on the objects he bought and sold. Often his clients tried to maneuver him into a position where he might relax his high standards, but he nearly always managed to keep them inviolate. There was an instance of this in 1934, which concerned three busts from the Dreyfus Collection—a Verrocchio, a Donatello, and a Desiderio da Settignano. Duveen offered this trio to John D. Rockefeller, Jr., for a million and a half dollars. Rockefeller felt that the price was rather high. Duveen, on the other hand, felt that, considering the quality of the busts, he was practically giving them away. He allowed Rockefeller a year's option; the busts were to remain in the Rockefeller mansion as nonpaying guests. During that time, Duveen hoped, the attraction the host felt for his visitors would ripen into more intense emotion.

After several months, the attraction *did* ripen into affection, but not a million and a half dollars' worth. Rockefeller wrote Duveen a letter with a counterproposal. He had some tapestries for which he had paid a quarter of a million dollars. He proposed to send Duveen these tapestries, so that *he* could have a chance to become fond of *them*, and to buy the busts for a million dollars, throwing in the tapestries. As the depression was still on and most people were feeling the effects of it, Rockefeller thought that Duveen might welcome the million in cash. This letter threw Duveen into a flurry. His legal adviser told him that the counteroffer, unless immediately repudiated, might result in a cancella-

tion of the option. Duveen sat down and wrote a letter himself. As for the tapestries, he told Rockefeller, he had some tapestries and didn't want any more. Moreover, he managed to convey the suggestion that if Rockefeller was in temporary financial difficulty, Duveen was ready to come to his assistance. He implied that, just as he already had some tapestries, he also had a million dollars.

Having dispatched the letter, Duveen, with his customary optimism, prophesied to his associates that Rockefeller would eventually buy the busts at his price. At Christmastime, with a week or so of the option still to go, Rockefeller told Duveen that his final decision was not to buy the busts and asked Duveen to take them back. Again, Duveen was prepared to be generous, this time about the security of Rockefeller's dwelling. "Never mind," he said. "Keep them in your house. They're as safe there as they would be in mine." In all love affairs, there comes a moment when desire demands possession. For Rockefeller, this occurred on the day before the option expired. On the 31st of December, at the 11th hour, he informed Duveen that he was buying the busts at a million and a half.

IN PARIS, Duveen always stayed at the Ritz. A permanent guest at this hotel, with whom Duveen had many encounters over the years, was Calouste S. Gulbenkian, the Armenian oil Croesus. Gulbenkian, who controls a good deal of the oil in Iraq, is often said to be the richest man in Europe, and possibly in the world, and possesses one of the world's most valuable art collections. He several times actually outmaneuvered Duveen.

One day, happening upon Duveen in one of the Ritz elevators, Gulbenkian told him that he knew of three fine English pictures for sale—a Reynolds, a Lawrence and a Gainsborough. Gulbenkian proposed that Duveen buy them and give him, as a reward for his tip, an option on any one of the three, with this proviso: Duveen was to put his own prices on the pictures before Gul-

benkian made his choice known, but the total price was not to exceed what Duveen had paid.

Duveen bought the pictures and went about setting the individual prices. He pondered deeply before deciding which picture he thought Gulbenkian would choose. The finest, although the least dazzling, of the three was Gainsborough's "Portrait of Mrs. Lowndes-Stone." The showiest was the Lawrence. Duveen concluded that the Lawrence would have the greatest appeal to his client's Oriental taste. He put a Duveen price on the Lawrence, and therefore had to set reasonable figures for the two others. He overlooked the fact that Gulbenkian is a canny student of art as well as an Oriental. Gulbenkian took the Gainsborough. It was one of the few times anyone acquired a Duveen without paying a Duveen price for it.

An effort Duveen made in 1921 to get a couple of Rembrandts for Gulbenkian led to an acrid lawsuit. The paintings, "Portrait of a Gentleman with a Tall Hat and Gloves" and "Portrait of a Lady with an Ostrich-Feather Fan" (See p. 241), were considered very good Rembrandts. The Russian Prince Felix Youssouppoff, the slayer of Rasputin, had inherited them. Finding himself in need of cash, Youssouppoff proposed to the Philadelphia collector, Joseph E. Widener, whom he went to see in London, that he lend Widener the pictures in return for a loan of £100,000. Widener replied that he would buy the pictures for £100,000, but he wouldn't lend a penny on them.

Widener returned to New York and, after some weeks of negotiating by cables and letters, Youssouppoff agreed to sell Widener the pictures for £100,000, with the understanding that Widener would sell them back for the same sum, plus eight percent annual interest, if on or before January 1, 1924, a restoration of the old regime in Russia made it possible for Youssouppoff again "to keep and personally enjoy these wonderful works of art."

Just about this time, Gulbenkian indicated to Duveen a hankering for Rembrandts. Duveen said, "You've just lost the two

best in the world to Widener. He bought them both for £100,000, and each of them is worth that." Gulbenkian was indignant that a man of Rembrandt's talent should sell for less than he was worth; he was willing to give the artist his financial due. This news was transmitted to Youssoupoff, who felt he was now in a position to ask Widener to give his pictures back. Widener wanted to know what revolution had taken place that would enable the Prince to enjoy the pictures again. Youssoupoff replied that it was none of his business. Widener said that if Youssoupoff was going to be so reticent, he jolly well wasn't going to get the pictures. Youssoupoff's reply was to bring suit against Widener for their return.

This lawsuit was something less than urbane. One of Youssoupoff's lawyers contended that the Prince had merely mortgaged the paintings to Widener for £100,000, at eight percent, and another lawyer called Widener a "pawnbroker." A third declared that he was a sharp trader who had taken in a gentleman.

Duveen, called in by the defense, gave the court a somewhat different picture of Widener's character. He testified that Widener

### *Pinkie*

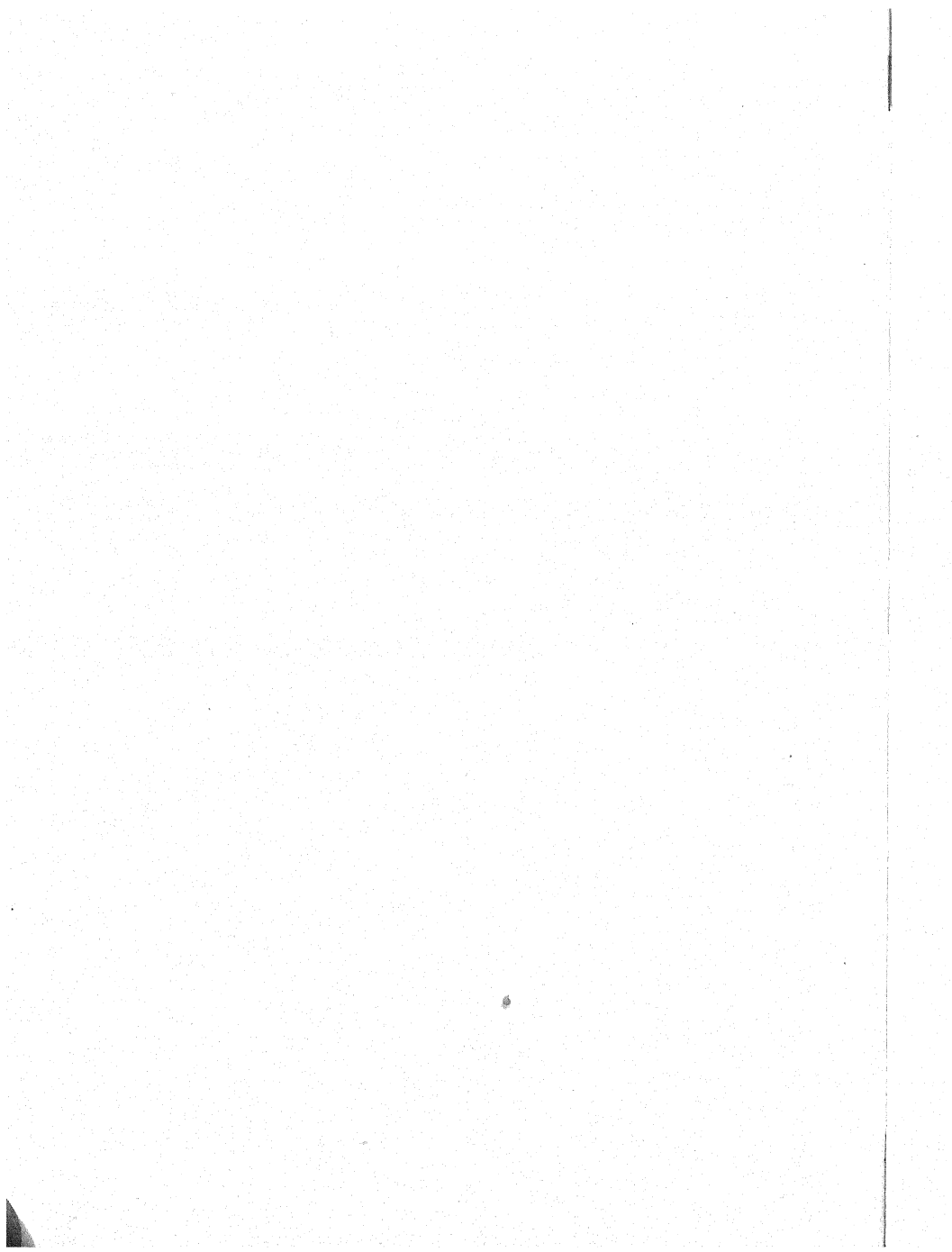
SIR THOMAS LAWRENCE, R. A. (1769-1830), British School

Courtesy of the Henry E. Huntington Library and Art Gallery

San Marino, California

SIR THOMAS, a child prodigy who eventually became President of the Royal Academy, was neither great nor small — brilliant unquestionably, though perhaps somewhat superficial. He does not conceal his boredom with many of the society women whose charms he was so often engaged to paint, but his portraits of children are notably fresh and charming. His *Pinkie* is known throughout the Anglo-Saxon world. She was a sweet girl, both arch and self-possessed, the sort who might have grown up to be a Jane Austen heroine. However, "Pinkie," otherwise Miss Sarah Moulton-Barrett, died at the age of 12 — the same year Lawrence painted her — never knowing that her niece, Elizabeth Barrett, would figure in a world-famous romance with the poet, Robert Browning.





had, in the past few years, bought \$600,000 worth of art from him, and he, Duveen, had told him that the Widener name on his books was good enough for him. "You can pay when you want," he had said.

Widener, unnecessarily complicating matters for himself, mentioned the fact that Youssouppoff not only had signed a contract but also had sent him a cable confirming the closing of the deal. But when Widener was asked to produce the cable, he couldn't find it. "I concede that the cable couldn't be found," an opposition lawyer said generously, "because it appears quite plain that such a cablegram was never sent." The Interstate Commerce Commission at that time required that the cable companies keep duplicates of cables for only a year. "All anyone would have to do if they were impelled by a sinister motive," the lawyer continued, "would be to wait a year and then testify as to . . . a fictitious cable."

Goaded by these remarks, Widener sent Pinkerton detectives to his estate in Elkins Park, outside Philadelphia, where they ripped pillowcases open and peered into the secret compartments of antique escritoirs, but the missing cable did not turn up. Nevertheless, Widener won the case. The court decided that his contract with Youssouppoff amounted to a sale, and that if the Prince were to buy the pictures back, Gulbenkian would be the man to "personally enjoy" them. A year before Widener's death, the Rembrandts went to the National Gallery, in Washington, where they now hang. Months after the suit was over, the missing cablegram fell out of an old studbook in the Widener living room.

IN LONDON, Duveen occasionally, and uncharacteristically, devoted himself to a nonbuyer who was not even a potential buyer. For a period, he piloted Ramsay MacDonald, then a mere member of Parliament, around the London galleries, though MacDonald came from a social stratum that did not indulge in picture-buying. But even Duveen's altruism proved to be profitable. MacDonald became Prime Minister in 1929, and shortly afterward Duveen

was appointed to the board of the National Gallery, a distinction that had never before been conferred on an art dealer.

MacDonald and Duveen had a good time sitting next to each other at board meetings of the National Gallery, and the grateful pupil brought Duveen the peerage. At a birthday dinner for MacDonald given by Duveen at his beautiful house in New York a few years before, the visiting Prime Minister had announced, "I think I know what Sir Joseph's ambition is. If it's the last act of my life, I shall get it for him." MacDonald personally canvassed the heads of all the art museums in England, asking them to petition the King for Duveen's elevation to the peerage. Duveen had been knighted in 1919; he had been made a baronet in 1927. In 1933, he was made a baron.

EACH TIME Duveen arrived in New York from London there were fanfares of publicity for him and his most recent fabulous purchases. The "Twenty Years Ago Today" column of the New York *Herald Tribune*, has been studded for some time now with Duveen tidbits, such as:

### *The Small Cowper Madonna*

RAPHAEL SANZIO (1483-1520), Umbrian School

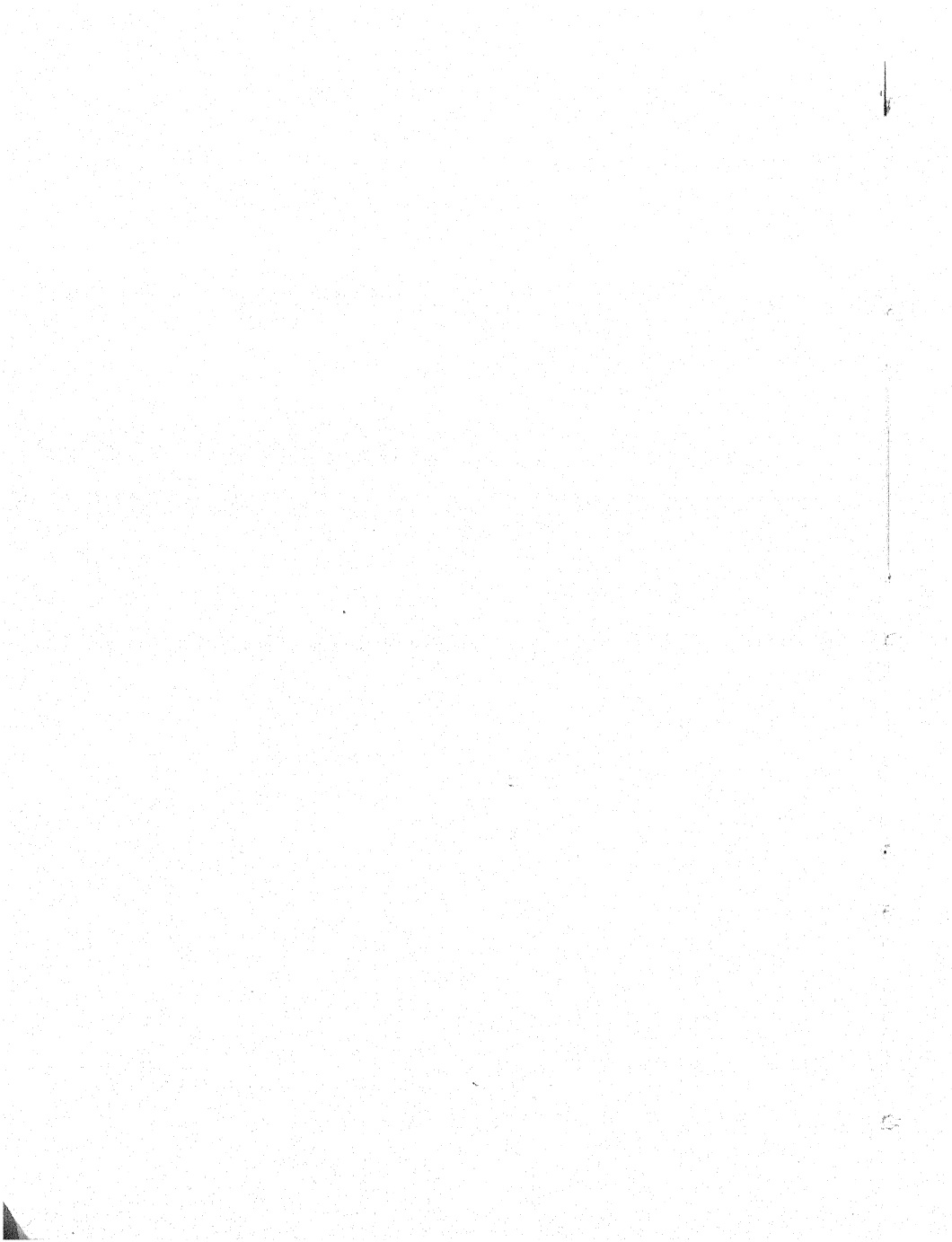
Courtesy of the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D. C.

(Widener Collection)

By any standard, this Madonna is one of the transcendent masterpieces now on view in America — and it was painted by a youth of 22. No wonder he was called the divine Raphael! It was painted in 1505, and shows, in its suave modeling, the influence of Leonardo da Vinci, and in the amplitude of its figures, the influence of Michelangelo. The mother is represented not as the prey of agonies or forebodings; she is the personification of purity and serenity and with the child is harmoniously composed in a compact pyramid. It is perhaps the loveliest of all the Raphael Madonnas — the conception of an artist who created the most beautiful human beings since the sculptures of the ancient Greeks.







*February 19, 1926*

Sir Joseph Duveen, the art dealer, has bought the Wachtmeister Rembrandt for \$410,000, one of the highest prices ever paid for a Rembrandt, and is bringing it to New York.

*July 18, 1927*

Sir Joseph Duveen, international art dealer, bought in London yesterday the entire collection of 120 Italian Old Masters belonging to Robert H. Benson. . . . The purchase price was \$3,000,000.

*January 7, 1929*

London: Andrew W. Mellon, Secretary of the Treasury of the United States, has purchased (from Duveen) for \$970,000 Raphael's "Madonna," known as "The Cowper Madonna." The painting bears Raphael's signature and the date "1508."

IN 1926, Duveen brought back Lawrence's "Pinkie." (See p. 247) The circumstances illustrate Duveen's tenacity in his fight to establish his pre-eminence among the art dealers of the world.

Duveen's chief rival in this country was the venerable firm of Knoedler. When Duveen was starting out, Knoedler had arrangements with Mellon and several other big collectors to make all their art purchases for them, on a fixed commission. From the beginning, Duveen felt that his mission was twofold—to teach millionaire American collectors what the great works of art were, and to teach them that they could get those works of art only through him. To establish this required considerable daring and a lot of money.

When it was announced that "Pinkie" was to be sold at auction at Christie's in London, a partner in Knoedler's came to Duveen, who was then in London himself, with the suggestion that they buy it jointly. Knoedler's, he said, had a client he was sure would take it. Duveen suspected that the motive for this friendly overture was to keep him from forcing the price up and he politely declined. The Knoedler man said that no one could outbid his

client. Duveen said that no one could keep him from buying "Pinkie."

On the eve of the sale, Duveen went to Paris, leaving behind him an unlimited bid with the manager of Christie's. He awaited the result with increasing nervousness. On the day of the sale, he informed friends that he was buying a great picture, that he had once sold it himself for \$100,000, and that, as a rich bidder was interested, the price might go to \$200,000. That evening, he learned that he had paid \$375,000 for "Pinkie."

When Duveen recovered from the shock, he brought the young lady to New York and telephoned Andrew Mellon in Washington. (He had known all along who his rival's rich client was.) Mellon said that he had indeed been trying to get "Pinkie" but that Duveen had paid an outrageous price for her and he wasn't interested. Duveen repeated his cardinal dictum: "When you pay high for the priceless, you're getting it cheap." Mellon was still not interested. Duveen then told Mellon that "Pinkie" was being offered to him as a courtesy because a man of his taste was worthy of her, but that if he thought her price too high, it was all right, because he had another prospective purchaser. Mellon was skeptical and he was still not interested. The next morning, Duveen telephoned H. E. Huntington, at San Marino, California. The Huntington mansion there is today a public art gallery and library, and there "Pinkie" now hangs.

Mellon did not make the same mistake again. When, shortly afterward, the Romney "Portrait of Mrs. Davenport" was put up for auction at Christie's, Knoedler's once more suggested to Duveen that he go shares with them, and once more Duveen refused. Knoedler's kept bidding until the picture cost Duveen over \$300,000, the highest price ever paid for a Romney. Duveen offered it to Mellon, and Mellon immediately bought it.

WHEN the 20th century began, American millionaires were collecting mainly Barbizons, or "sweet French" pictures, and English

"story" pictures. They owned the originals of the Rosa Bonheur prints that one can remember from the parlors of one's youth — pastoral scenes, with groups of morose cattle. Thanks to Duveen, these pictures are now consigned to the basements of the few big private houses that still exist or the basements of museums that no longer have the effrontery to hang them. Of the Barbizon school, only Corot and Millet now have any financial rating, and that has greatly declined. A Corot that in its day brought \$50,000 can be bought now for \$10,000 or \$15,000, and Millet is even worse off.

Although the French painter Bouguereau represented the kind of art that Duveen was eager to displace, he was flexible enough to make use of him. A highly visible nude by the French master was used by Duveen as bait to bring customers to the fields in which Duveen specialized. Clients would buy the Bouguereau, stare at it for some time, get faintly tired of it and then, as they heard of rarer and subtler works, grow rather ashamed of it. They would send it back, and Duveen would replace it with something a little more refined. Sometimes he amused himself by using the Bouguereau for a different purpose — to cure customers who had succumbed to the ultramodern. Some collectors who had started with painters like Picasso grew hungry for a flesh-and-blood curve after a while, and presently found themselves with the traveling Bouguereau. Duveen sent it to them for a breather, and afterward they went the way of the first group of collectors.

DUVEEN looked like a conservative English businessman. He was of middle height, stocky build and ruddy coloring, with clear, penetrating gray eyes and a cropped mustache. He exuded opulence, yet he never carried more than a little cash. His valet decided what he would need for incidentals and, when he dressed Duveen, would put in his pocket a few bills to enable him to get about. Once, when the valet was ill, Duveen said that he, too, would have to take to his bed, because there was no one to give him cash for taxi fare.

Duveen seldom read anything, unless a book said something about a picture he was interested in. Once, when the custodian of his immensely valuable collection of books on art brought him a rare volume he wanted, he seized it and tore out the pages he was after, to free himself from the encumbrance of irrelevant text.

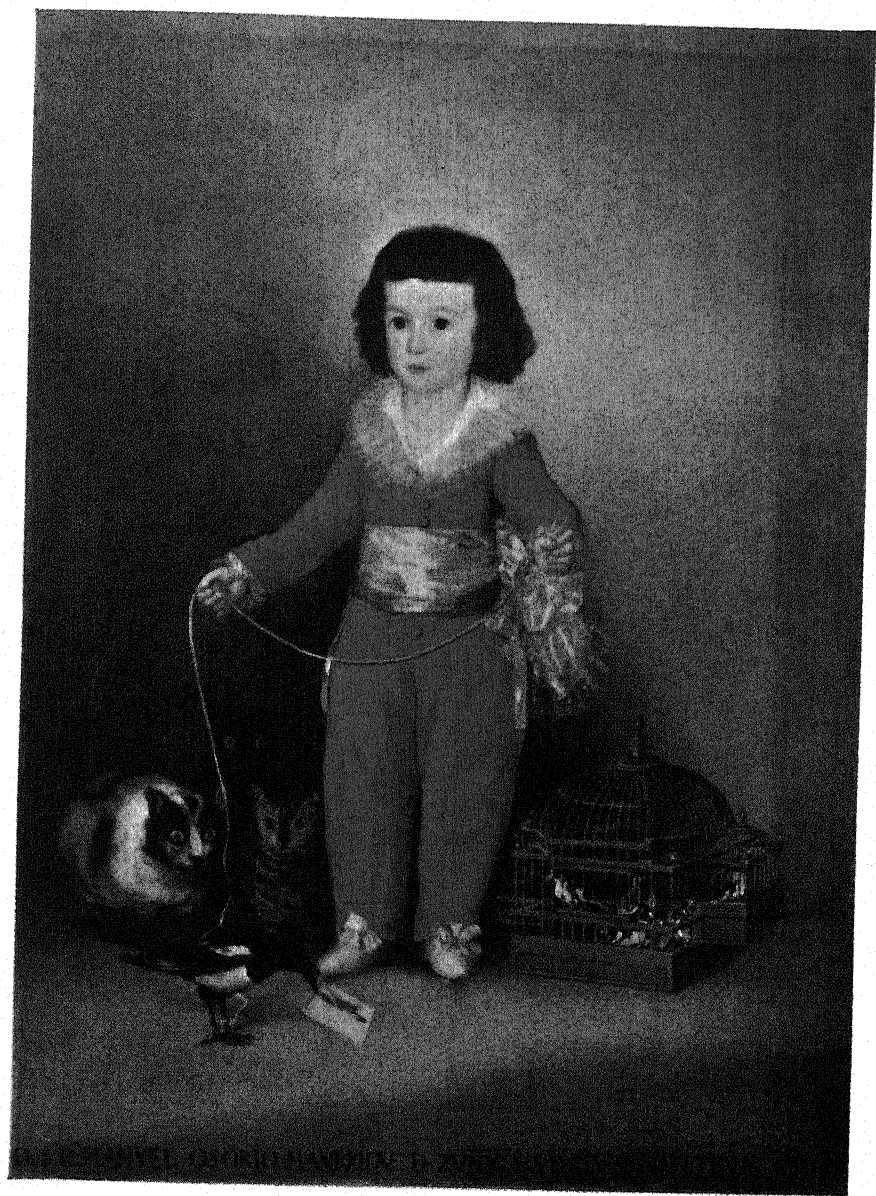
Duveen was more interested in the theater than books. At the theater, his appreciation of a funny line was sometimes given audible expression five minutes after the rest of the audience had got the point. Speaking of himself, he often repeated the formula for giving an Englishman a happy old age: tell him a joke in his youth. A famous storyteller himself, he had a fondness for basic humor. A friend made the mistake of telling him the story about the colored man arrested for stealing chickens who, when confronted by irrefutable evidence, said to the magistrate: "If it's all the same to you, Judge, let's forget the whole business!" Duveen made the friend repeat it whenever they met. Perhaps, in the steam bath of litigation in which Duveen was immersed all his life, the number of occasions on which his own attitude ap-

### *Don Manuel Osorio de Luñiga*

FRANCISCO JOSÉ DE GOYA Y LUCIENTES (1746-1828), Spanish School

Courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City  
(*Bache Collection*)

THE little *señor* in his brilliant satins is living proof of the fact that a really great work of art is never the property of specialists or high-brows, but something which everyone can appreciate: for Don Manuel, in the past decade, has enjoyed a mounting popularity from coast to coast. The artist Goya loved children, had 20 legitimate ones of his own, and portrayed them often, endowing them with wise, tender faces and firm small bodies tapering down to delicate feet. He painted Don Manuel, he said, to convince his friends that a Spanish child might rival the imperial distinction of the children in the great Venetian paintings. And to show his contempt for classic tradition, he introduced household pets into the picture—perhaps the most sinister cat in art, and a magpie exhibiting the signature the artist never forgot to include.







proximated the colored man's made him such an enthusiastic audience for this story.

Certain men are endowed with the faculty of concentrating on their own affairs to the exclusion of what is going on elsewhere in the cosmos. One day, walking along Central Park West, Duveen ran into the art dealer Felix Wildenstein. With his infectious friendliness, he linked his arm through Wildenstein's and suggested that they go for a walk in the Park. Wildenstein explained that he was hurrying to keep an appointment—but they were presently walking in the Park. Duveen turned the conversation to his own personality, in which he took a lively interest. "What do people think about me?" he asked. "What are they saying about me?" Wildenstein quoted a slightly derogatory opinion a friend had expressed; he had to have some revenge for being so abruptly swept off his course. Duveen was not upset. "That's all right," he said, as if a favorable opinion would have upset him, "but does he think I am a great man?"

ON ONE occasion, Duveen found it necessary to persuade Henry C. Frick, the steel magnate and founder of the Frick museum in New York, that no great picture was to be obtained except through Duveen. At the Fricks' one night in 1916, Duveen noticed in his host an air at once abstracted and expectant. Duveen was adept at reaching out antennae to probe his clients' hidden thoughts. He finally drew from Frick the fact that he was on the trail of a really great picture, the name of which he refused to disclose. Duveen went home and pondered.

Through the underground of the trade, he found out in a few days that Sir Audley Dallas Neeld, whose home was in Wiltshire, was about to sell Gainsborough's "Mall in St. James's Park" to Knoedler's. Obviously, this was the picture Frick had in mind. Duveen immediately cabled his English agent exact instructions. He believed that Knoedler's man, sure the Gainsborough was in the bag, would be in no hurry to consummate the deal. Duveen

told his agent to take the first train next morning to Wiltshire, tell Sir Audley that he was prepared to outbid everyone else for the picture, and offer him a binder of £1000 to prove it. Duveen got the Gainsborough for \$300,000.

The next time he dined with Frick, he found his host depressed. "I've lost that picture," Frick told Duveen. "I was on the trail of a very great painting—Gainsborough's 'Mall in St. James's Park.'"

"Why, Mr. Frick," Duveen said, "I bought that picture. When you want a great picture, you must come to me because, you know, I get the first chance at all of them. You shall have the Gainsborough for exactly what I paid for it." In the first joy of acquisition, Frick was ecstatically grateful, not stopping to think that Sir Audley would probably have sold the picture to Knoedler's for so much less that Knoedler's price, with a profit, would have been lower than Duveen's without one.

When Duveen brought the Gainsborough to Frick, he pointed to it triumphantly and laughed his infectious laugh. "Now, Mr. Frick," he said, "you can send it to Knoedler's to be framed."

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## *The Infanta Maria Teresa*

DIEGO RODRÍGUEZ DE SILVA Y VELÁSQUEZ (1599-1660), Spanish School

Courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City

(Bache Collection)

No reproduction can fully convey the restrained dignity of this portrait of a young princess whose face seems to bloom into vitality from the frame of the fantastic headdress. Velásquez, court painter to Philip IV of Spain, depicted the Infanta again and again, using the three-tone palette of his final period. When this picture was painted, the girl, proud and old beyond her years, was 15. Though Velásquez was devoted to her, when she sat for him she became merely a model whom he glorified, molding her heavy Hapsburg features and incredible hair with the butterfly ornaments into a matchless work. The ornaments delighted the artist Whistler, who remarked that the Infanta was a work of art by a genius who dipped his brush into tones of light and air.





## 2

THE original Duveen establishment was a blacksmith shop in the little village of Meppel, in Holland. Joseph Duveen, the proprietor, and his wife, Eva, had four children — Joseph Joel, born in 1843; Henry, born in 1854; and two daughters. The blacksmith's wife must have been a remarkable woman. She managed, in addition to doing her household chores, to give her boys all the education they ever had — and to become a collector in a small way. She took to buying bits of Holland's celebrated delft pottery with her small savings, and in time she became a connoisseur of it. She would send her two boys around the neighborhood to buy or exchange pieces, and the children developed a taste that was as perceptive as her own. Delft was cheap in Holland, but she loved it passionately. After Mrs. Duveen had been collecting for some years, the news percolated through to Meppel that across the Channel, in rich and mighty England, there were people who wanted to buy delft even if they could afford to buy other things. This gave her a startling inspiration: she had loftier hopes for her boys than blacksmithing. In 1866, when Joseph Joel was 23, she loaded him with all the delft he could carry and packed him off to England to sell it.

Joseph Joel was happy to go to England, but when he got there he had a change of heart. Selling delft struck him as an unmanly sort of work, and he finally decided to become a traveling salesman in lard. One evening, in Hull, he met a Miss Rosetta Barnett, the daughter of a local pawnbroker. He proceeded to rush her and, perhaps because he was tired of carrying it around, he showered her with his mother's delft. Miss Barnett's father was impressed. He said he would give his consent to the marriage if Joseph Joel would get enough delft from his mother to set up a shop in Hull.

Joseph Joel married Miss Barnett and rented a tiny shop. From delft, he branched out into furniture and objects of art, learning about his merchandise as he acquired it. The Duveens' business grew, and so did their family. They produced eight boys and four girls. Their eldest was the future Lord Duveen, who was born over the delft-and-furniture shop on October 14, 1869.

Now the blacksmith's wife, in Meppel, decided that her son Henry should undergo a course of instruction under Joseph Joel, in Hull, and then move on to America. If rich Englishmen bought delft, so, she reasoned, would rich Americans. In 1876, after a few years of apprenticeship in Hull, Henry landed in Boston. A rotund, flat-footed little man with a walrus mustache, who had never been to school and who spoke English with a guttural Dutch accent, Henry was to become within a few years the confidant and the adviser on art purchases of two of the most inaccessible men in America; the elder J. P. Morgan and Benjamin Altman. It is not recorded that Henry ever gave anything away, but he managed nevertheless to generate an atmosphere of Santa Claus benevolence. His clients, and all his fellow dealers, were soon affectionately calling him Uncle Henry.

When Uncle Henry arrived in Boston, though, he was just a Dutch immigrant with hardly any English and a lot of delft. The architects and decorators of Boston liked his pottery, with its graceful blue designs and charming Dutch scenes. After Henry had covered Boston thoroughly, he set up shop on the third floor of a loft building on Maiden Lane in New York, expanding his line to include various kinds of china, and also furniture.

One day there toiled up the three flights of stairs to Uncle Henry's Maiden Lane establishment a short, stout gentleman with thick glasses, who said, after he had recovered his breath, that he was interested in Chinese porcelains. So was Henry Duveen, and they had a porcelain lovers' chat that ended in the visitor's buying two antique Chinese vases of enameled copper. The visitor was

the department-store magnate Benjamin Altman, and this visit led to the accumulation by Altman, through Uncle Henry, of a distinguished collection of Chinese porcelains. The two copper vases are now in the Altman Collection at the Metropolitan Museum.

Uncle Henry's migration from Boston to New York was paralleled by his brother Joseph Joel's from Hull to London. In the big city, Joseph Joel Duveen put his stock in a shop on Oxford Street and, as before, installed his family in rooms above it. It must have been quite a clutter, for the stock had grown enormously: English, French and Italian furniture, French and Gothic tapestries, Chinese porcelains, Italian velvets and Spanish leathers, and, before long, a family of 14 Duveens.

The Duveen girls were sent to school, but the boys had very sketchy educations. They were simply put to work in the shop. The sons were extremely quarrelsome by the time they reached their early teens and a family conference, an observer recalls, was usually a pitched battle. The father's decision, however, always prevailed. Later, Lord Duveen remembered that, when they all sat at the dinner table in their Oxford Street quarters, his father used to begin the meal with the command: "Let no one speak unless I ask a question." As he didn't feel that his children could tell him much, there were often long silences at the table.

Another recollection of Duveen's was of being taken by his father to see the elder J. P. Morgan in his London house. Uncle Henry, by then a pet of Morgan's, had told Morgan that his brother was, next to him, the highest authority on Chinese porcelains. Therefore, Morgan wanted Joseph Joel to see five Chinese porcelain beakers he had just bought. He showed the Duveens, father and son, into this library. "Uncle Henry tells me you know a lot about porcelains," he said to Joseph Joel. "Well, here are five beakers. Three of them are authentic and two of them are reproductions. Now, if you're such an authority, which are which?" Joseph Joel peered at the beakers, then lifted his walking

stick and smashed two of them. He offered, if he'd broken good ones, to pay for them. Morgan was relieved to find that he could not collect.

The Oxford Street business prospered and Joseph Joel acquired many distinguished patrons, including the Prince of Wales, later Edward VII.

When the Prince became King in 1901, he had Joseph Joel arrange much of the decoration of Westminster Abbey for the Coronation. This automatically made Joseph Joel the foremost decorator in England. For this and other services, the King knighted him.

Uncle Henry, in turn, developed a cozy relationship with King George V, cemented by the passion both men had for collecting stamps. Uncle Henry used to reminisce about tranquil evenings spent in Buckingham Palace, with the King and himself working at their albums, and Queen Mary embroidering. After Uncle Henry's death, his stamp collection was privately sold, for a million

## *Saint John in the Desert*

DOMENICO VENEZIANO (circa 1400-1461), Florentine School

Courtesy of the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D. C.

(Kress Collection)

IN this landscape we have the work of one of the rarest of masters, one who left us not more than a dozen paintings and whose career is enveloped in mystery. Domenico seems to have gone from Venice to Florence to collaborate with another great painter, Andrea del Castagno. According to an apocryphal account, Castagno then murdered Domenico in order to monopolize the secrets of oil painting which the Venetian had picked up in Flanders.

The painting is part of an altarpiece painted for a church in Florence — six panels now scattered in various art galleries. The Saint John was painted from an old statue, from memory; and the primitive mountains were drawn long before the camera had revealed the surfaces of the world. But both saint and background make a far more appealing picture than anything possible to the literal eye of the camera.







and a half dollars. Queen Mary later became a friend and patron of Joseph Duveen. For many years, she seldom ventured into an art gallery without him.

THE FIRM of Duveen Brothers, dealers in furniture and art objects, was officially established in 1879; Joseph Joel Duveen, presiding over the London shop, and Uncle Henry, presiding over his New York walk-up, were partners. In 1886, Joseph Joel sent his son Joseph, then 17, on his first trip to America, to get several months' experience in Uncle Henry's place.

Joseph was disappointed by the smallness of Uncle Henry's establishment. It served well enough for Altman, Morgan and Uncle Henry, but Joseph didn't care for it. Before Uncle Henry knew what was up, he had been hustled out of Maiden Lane to what Joseph considered a more becoming location, on Fifth Avenue just below the old Waldorf. The day Joseph got his bewildered uncle into the new quarters, somebody came in and asked to look at a certain tapestry. It was William C. Whitney. Joseph parted with the tapestry for \$10,000. When he got back to London, he reported to his father that not only had he moved Duveen Brothers to the smartest location in New York but he had acquired for them an American customer who appeared to have taste. Uncle Henry's attitude toward his prodigious nephew had about it something of the resignation with which one submits to a tornado. "This boy is a genius, but he will drive me crazy," he said.

One day, not long after Joseph's return to London, a stocky gentleman with a marked Irish brogue, accompanied by his wife, an unassuming little woman in a plumed hat, walked into the shop on Oxford Street. They asked to see some screens. Joseph Joel had recently had several made up of fine old Spanish leather, and he told Joseph to bring them out. The lady, in ecstasy, bought one screen after another. As the sales mounted, the elder Duveen whispered to his son to find out quickly who these people were. Joseph went into consultation with their coachman—an early

instance of his lifelong practice of picking up useful intelligence from servants. He wrote the customers' name on a slip of paper, and handed it to his father. "You may think it strange, Mr. Duveen, that I am buying so many screens," the woman was saying just then. "Not at all, Lady Guinness," replied the proprietor. "You have many fine homes, and you are quite right to supply them with screens." Lady Guinness beamed at her husband. "You see, Edward," she said, "Mr. Duveen knows who we are!"

Since the purchaser, Sir Edward Guinness, the brewer—later Lord Iveagh—was one of the richest men in England, the elder Duveen was enchanted by the episode. It had an entirely different effect on his son. Joseph knew that while Guinness was picking up these knickknacks for trifling sums, he was spending millions of pounds on paintings and sculptures: Guinness, simply by his purchases for his famous art collection at Ken Wood House, in Hampstead Heath, made the London art firm of Agnew's rich.

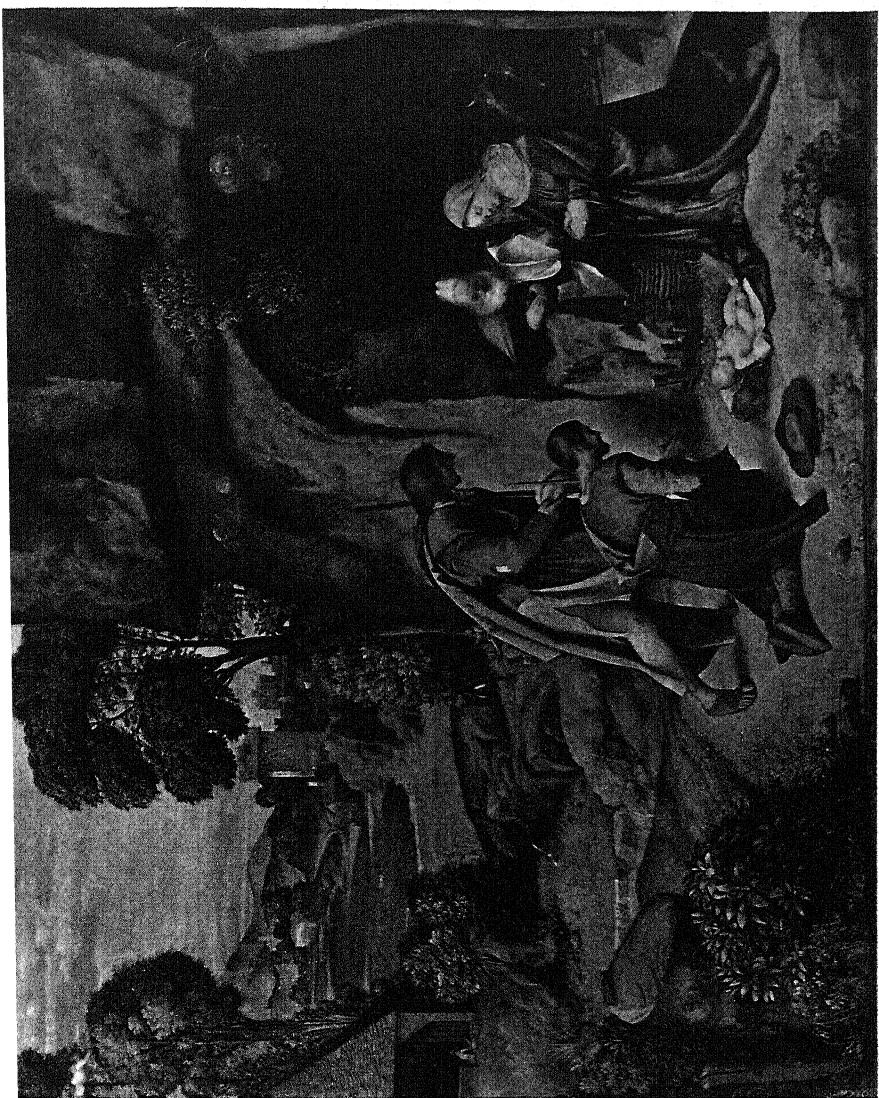
### *The Adoration of the Shepherds*

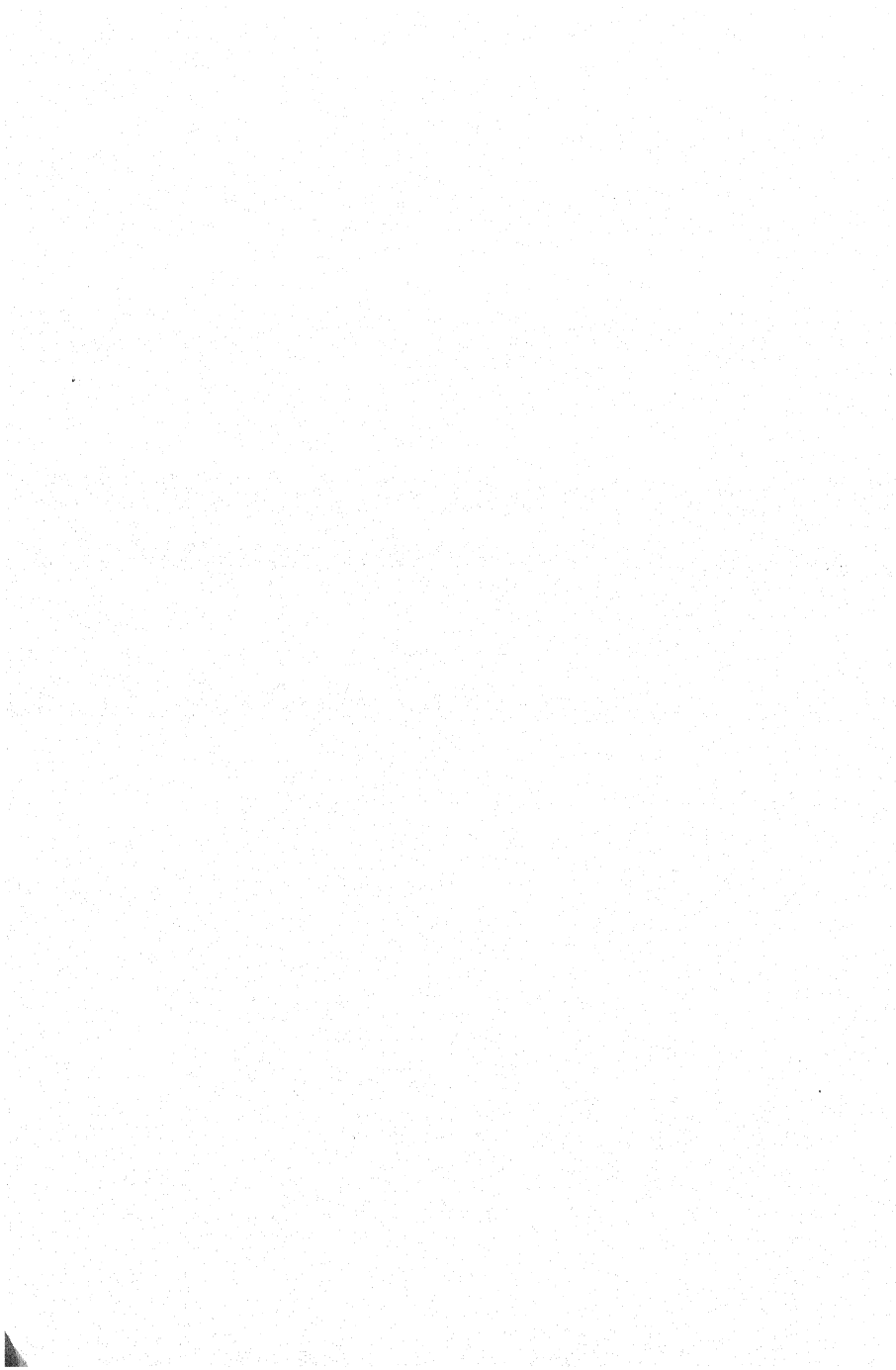
GIORGIONE (circa 1478-1510), Venetian School

Courtesy of the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D. C.

(Kress Collection)

GIORGIONE died of the plague at the age of 32, leaving to the world a few paintings which are probably the most coveted possessions in all art. Less than ten are accepted unreservedly as his own—among them, after years of contention, *The Adoration of the Shepherds*. The great Venetian, in the Venetian spirit he helped to create, was occupied mostly with profane subjects intended for voluptuous connoisseurs; only three or four examples of his religious work survive. His pictures contain little narrative; he was content to present a scene simply as a rich and beautiful fact of existence—or, as here, to catch his figures in suspended action and thus hold them forever as witnesses of the miracle of the Lord's birth. He carried to absolute perfection the unity of form and mood, a binding of figures and landscapes into a flawless harmony which, as has been observed many times, affects the senses like a musical composition.





"It made me sick to see people like Lord Iveagh buying mere art objects from us and paintings elsewhere," Duveen said later.

So Joseph began an intensive courtship of picture experts that was to continue the rest of his life. The biggest man in the field then was Dr. Wilhelm von Bode, director of the Kaiser Friedrich Museum in Berlin, and the world's leading authority on Rembrandt. Duveen went to Berlin and got Dr. von Bode to advise him. Then he started to make enormous financial commitments for the Duveen Brothers' firm, cajoling his father as best he could into stringing along with him.

In 1901, Duveen paid the biggest price that up to that time had been paid for a painting sold at a British auction — \$70,250 — for "Lady Louisa Manners" by John Hoppner. The fact that he had to sell this first picture at a loss did not deter him from buying more and more. Finally, in 1906, in Berlin, he soared into the ether and bought for two and a half million dollars the famous Oskar Hainauer Collection. The collection contained a vast number of art objects; they made the elder Duveen's mouth water so much that he swallowed the paintings, too. The art objects in the Hainauer Collection sold furiously, and this made it easier for Duveen to persuade his father to let him buy another collection — the Rodolphe Kann. Joseph bought the Kann Collection in Paris, with a bank loan of \$5,000,000. As his father suffered from high blood pressure, Duveen didn't inform him that this collection consisted almost entirely of pictures and sculptures. His father found it out, however, and the elder Duveen, who hadn't divined the art hunger of American millionaires, felt that his world was collapsing. Shortly afterward, Joseph's father mercifully died of apoplexy.

Joseph Joel Duveen left his children and Uncle Henry an estate of close to \$7,000,000. When the estate was settled, about \$2,000,000 was in cash. The rest was tied up in the business, of which Uncle Henry owned 35 percent and Joseph 15 percent. Joseph eventually bought all the shares, almost entirely on credit.

Only a few months after his father's death, Joseph Duveen unhesitatingly bought still another Paris collection, the Maurice Kann, for which he paid \$3,000,000. The firm now had nearly ten and a half million dollars invested in three collections—mostly pictures and sculptures, about which Uncle Henry and Joseph's seven brothers knew very little. These three collections formed the backbone of Joseph Duveen's business. Their acquisition so early and the gradual selling of them over a period of nearly four decades has been called the most singular feat of long-range investment in art history. The last trip Duveen made to California to see his old friend and client, H. E. Huntington, was in 1926. He was accompanied by a freight car containing his wares and among them were many items from the same old Hainauer and Kann Collections. Duveen sold Huntington the entire contents of the freight car. How many times Duveen multiplied his investment of ten and a half million in his first three collections cannot be computed, but the increment was enormous.

NOT LONG after buying his third big collection, Joseph Duveen, confident in the knowledge that he owned the greatest inventory of works of art any art dealer had ever owned, sailed for New York with the intention of making it his headquarters. Uncle Henry once more found his nephew's presence not only exhilarating but disturbing. Joseph wanted him to move again. He leased the northwest corner of 56th Street and Fifth Avenue, cleared the site, and there put up a five-story, 30-room reproduction of a wing of the Ministry of Marine in Paris—a building he much admired. Even the stone was French—imported from quarries near St.-Quentin and Chassignolles. The total cost was \$1,000,000. Uncle Henry was appalled, but his nephew's optimism and impetuosity overwhelmed him. "I have it sold," Joseph once told him, referring to his inventory. "You have everything sold," said Uncle Henry helplessly. "Show me the bill of sale."

Meanwhile, in romance as well as in business, Joseph had



proved himself unpredictable. In 1899, he was engaged to marry the daughter of Isaac Lewis, one of the South African gold millionaires. The wedding was to be held in London. Duveen's Aunt Dora, Uncle Henry's wife, went over for it and took with her a lovely young friend of hers, Elsie Salamon, the daughter of a New York tobacco merchant of moderate means. At one of the prenuptial parties, Duveen met her. The effect on him was so powerful that he called off his marriage to Miss Lewis and married Miss Salamon instead. The marriage lasted till Duveen's death. The Duveens had one child, Dorothy; now married to a surgeon, she is living in London, as is Lady Duveen.

NOT LONG after Joseph's move to New York, there fell on the Duveens an unimaginable disaster: the famous Duveen smuggling case, which, in the end, led to the family's paying the U.S. Government the biggest settlement fine in the history of American jurisprudence up to that time.

The case hung fire for more than a year. The Duveens were accused not only of undervaluing their art treasures to the customs officials, but of having had a tendency to import lovely antique cabinets whose locked drawers held rolled-up paintings and tapestries that had been absent-mindedly stored away in them and then forgotten. The Government's demands started at \$6,000,000, climbed to eight, and eventually hit ten. After patient whittling, the Duveens' lawyers got the Government down to a modest \$1,400,000. But the Duveens didn't have \$1,400,000 handy.

At this point, the aura of Uncle Henry's benevolent personality shone out to save them. J. P. Morgan sent for one of the Duveens' lawyers to come to see him in his private office. When the lawyer entered the office, the great man transfixed his visitor with his piercing black eyes and barked, "Going to get Uncle Henry off?" The lawyer said that he'd like nothing better but that the Government had put a trifling obstacle in the way. "Get him off, get him off," barked Morgan. The lawyer became specific about the

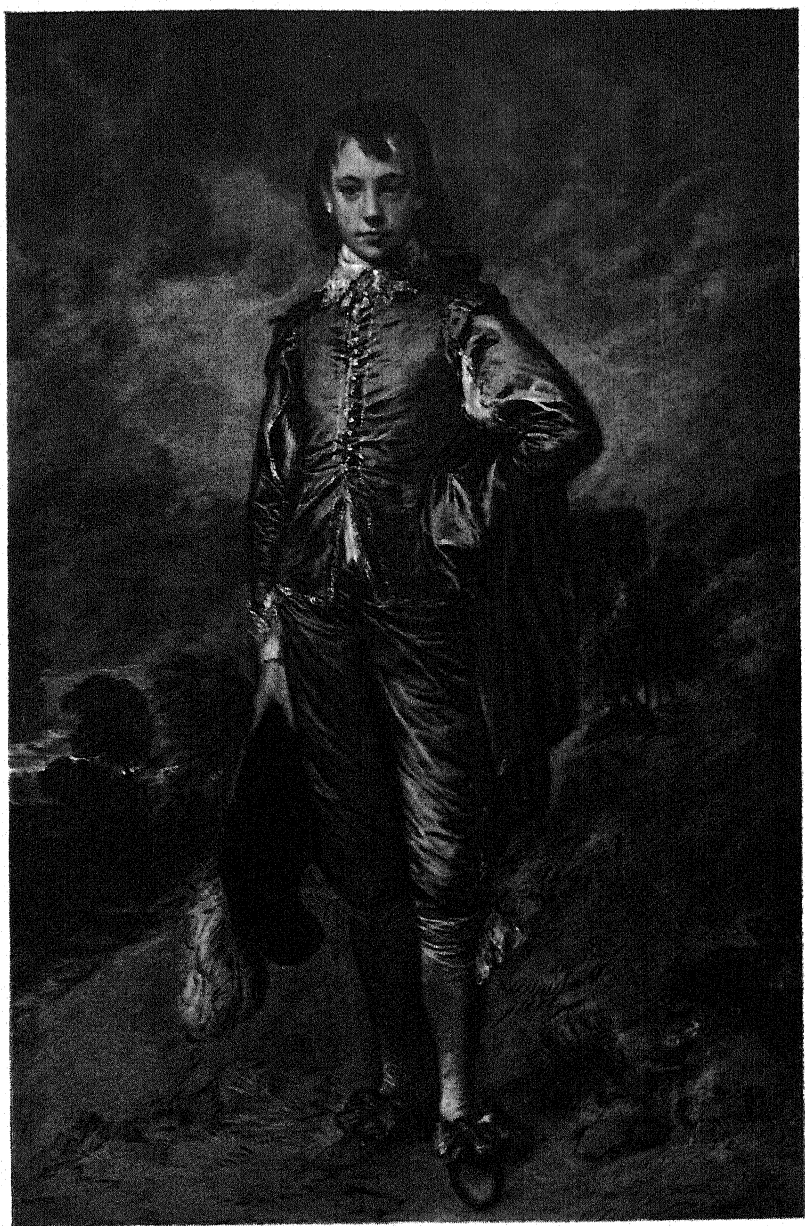
obstacle: it would require \$1,400,000. "We've got to get Uncle Henry off," Morgan said, sticking to the theme. "Chauncey Jones will take care of it." Chauncey Jones, it turned out, was Morgan's switchboard operator and handyman, but he must also have been a man of parts. When his boss asked him to get \$1,400,000 he didn't bat an eye. He pulled out his switches and ambled over to the First National Bank. The next day, the Duveens' lawyer received, in an envelope containing no other communication, a check for \$1,400,000. Uncle Henry got off.

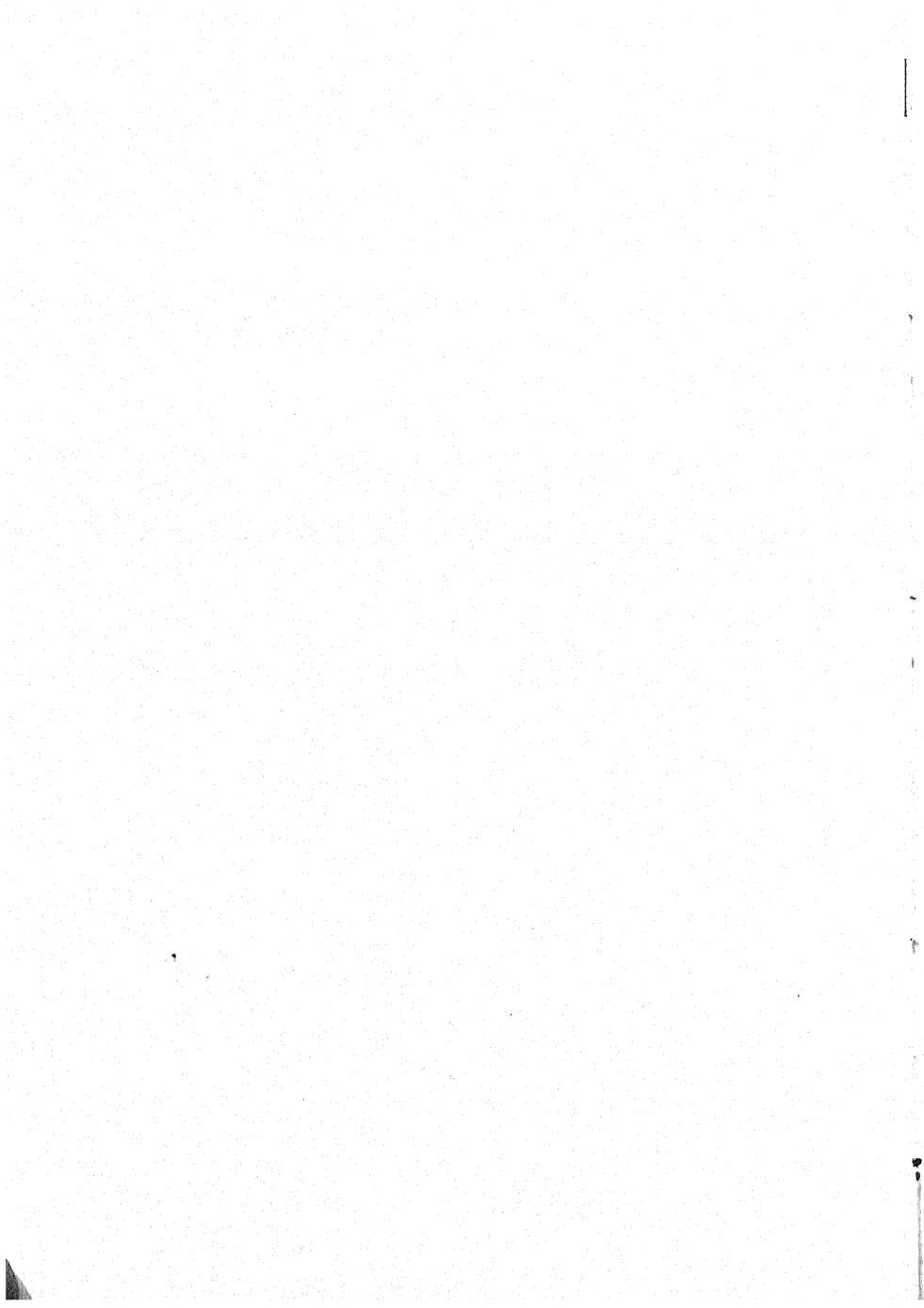
At the time, all their rivals in the art world were convinced that the Duveens were finished. But Joseph was imperturbable. A few days after the case ended, he asked one of his friendly enemies, "Who else would have so big a settlement?" Besides, he said, a law providing that no duty be collected on works of art over 20 years old had been passed in 1910. The United States Government was merely penalizing the Duveens for being prophetic. (Today, all works of art over 100 years old are duty-free.)

## *The Blue Boy*

THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH (1727-1788), British School  
Courtesy of the Henry E. Huntington Library and Art Gallery  
San Marino, California

To connoisseurs of charm, to artists baffled by the skill of a painter who, although largely self-taught, created enchanting pictures, and to mothers secretly nursing a princely ideal for their sons, *The Blue Boy* is the image par excellence. When the canvas was exhibited in London before its removal to America, 90,000 people flocked to see it in three weeks, and women wept as if a favorite son had been kidnaped. *The Blue Boy* is indeed captivating, but this handsome, moody adolescent was not in fact the prince he looks to be. The model was Master Jonathan Buttall, son of a wealthy ironmonger who was Gainsborough's neighbor in London, and the regal attire was taken from the painter's stockpile of fancy costumes. The right hand is not particularly well drawn, but this does not matter, since the feathery brushing and the style and charm suffusing the whole canvas reflect the fascinating personality of the painter.





When the reverberations of the smuggling case were beginning to fade, the firm suffered two blows that were, if anything, more devastating. In 1913, Morgan died. It was the only time he ever let Uncle Henry down. He owed the firm a quarter of a million dollars and his estate immediately paid it, but a quarter of a million dollars was small change compared to what the Duveens would have got had he lived. A few months later, Duveen suffered another blow in the death of Altman. Shortly after the smuggling case ended, Duveen had gone after a great picture known as "The Small Cowper Madonna," by Raphael. (See p. 251) For it he happily paid more than a half million dollars in cash. Altman agreed to buy the picture from him for three quarters of a million. But when the Raphael arrived, Altman was no longer alive to receive it, and even in Duveen's circle three-quarter-million-dollar customers were rare. The agreement between Altman and Duveen had been oral and, finding no evidence of sale, Altman's executors declined to accept the picture.

All his life, Joseph Duveen was in a race with death; his customers were mostly getting on in years. Now, caught in this nexus of disaster, Uncle Henry himself wanted to die, but his nephew forbade it: it was a luxury the firm couldn't afford. Something had to be done about the Raphael. Duveen rallied Uncle Henry and sent him to Philadelphia to see P. A. B. Widener. There was no time to lose; Widener's health was poor. (Two years later, he, too, died.) But Uncle Henry brought home the bacon. He sold the Raphael to Widener for \$700,000.

Duveen boasted that he understood the psychology of his dozen biggest customers much better than his competitors did. ("To understand psychology," in Duveen's terms, meant to be able to guess how much the traffic would bear.)

He more than once asked a prospective client, "Do you realize that the only thing you can spend \$100,000 on without spending a great deal more for upkeep is a picture? Once you've bought it, it costs you only a few hundred dollars every 15 years for clean-

ing." An effective supplementary sales argument, which he used repeatedly, was: "You can always make more money, but if you miss this picture, you'll never get another like it, for it is unique." It was the sort of homely truth Duveen's clients understood.

SINCE Duveen's death, one of the sunniest of the commentators on him and his era has been Mrs. William Randolph Hearst. Mrs. Hearst liked Duveen. She regarded the collecting mania of her husband and his friends as something that relieved the tension of their workaday lives. It was a tax-free time, she recalls, and the men in her crowd thought nothing of buying a pair of hawthorn vases at \$60,000 apiece. Mrs. Hearst said that the richest man in America — she describes him affectionately as a "stingy feller" — ended up by paying \$1,000,000 for one tapestry.

One day, Mrs. Hearst recalls, she and her husband had a difference of opinion about something of no real importance. For the moment, Hearst was extremely upset and he left the house

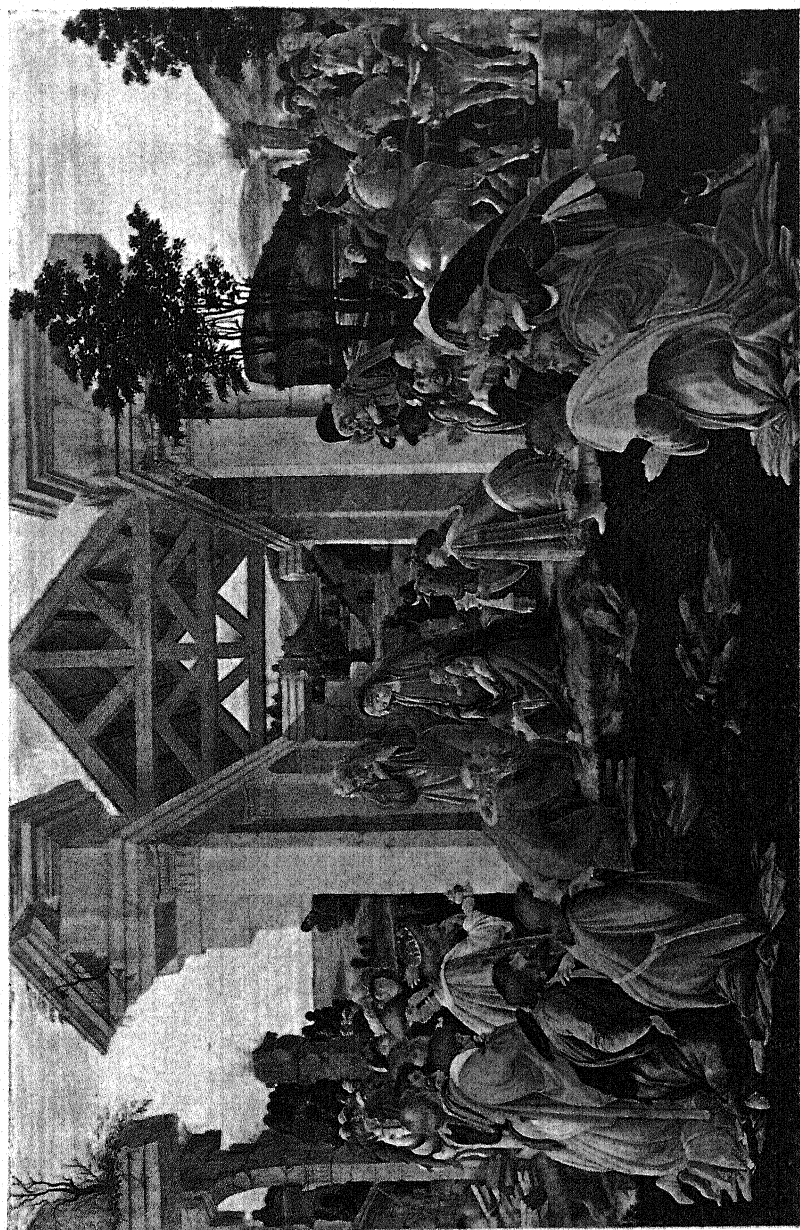
## *The Adoration of the Magi*

SANDRO BOTTICELLI (circa 1444-1510), Florentine School

Courtesy of the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D. C.

(Mellon Collection)

ALESSANDRO DI MARIANO DEI FILIPEPI, son of a tanner, derived the name of Botticelli, or "the little barrel," from his older brother, so-called because of his corpulence. Under this rude nickname he produced a body of pictures which, for many generations, have been objects of almost mystical veneration. In Rome, in 1481, he painted his sixth and final version of *The Adoration of the Magi*, a conception departing from historical precedent. The adoring figures, beautifully grouped and arrayed, are portraits of contemporary Romans, each in an attitude of potential action and each face tense with emotion; the architectural setting is a pseudoclassical ruin, the landscape a glimpse of Tuscany, and the Virgin a typical Botticelli creation — languorous, shy and delicate. The whole scene conveys in dramatic language the spirit of Christian worship and the miracle of the Nativity.







feeling the need of solace. Unlike many husbands in similar circumstances, he sought it at Duveen's gallery on Fifth Avenue. Duveen was just about to leave there, with Van Dyck's portrait of "Queen Henrietta Maria with Jeffrey Hudson and a Monkey." He gave Hearst a peek at the Queen and her companions. Somehow, for Hearst, this peek was just what the doctor ordered; he felt that if he could only have Henrietta Maria, he would feel better. Unfortunately, Duveen said, he had promised Henrietta Maria to Lady Duveen, and it was a promise on which he could not possibly renege. After this refusal, Henrietta Maria looked all the more desirable to Mr. Hearst and he insisted that he must have her; he was not used to being denied anything that he wanted very badly. As Hearst begged, Duveen became plaintive; he implored Hearst to see things from his point of view. Hearst wouldn't. In those few minutes, it had become vital to him to take Henrietta home. After some time, Duveen suggested that if he did let Hearst take Henrietta home, he would have to charge so much for the privilege that he wouldn't advise him to insist. Hearst, poker-faced, now felt he *had* Duveen. The tug of war continued for a while, but Hearst's victory was no longer in doubt. Finally, Duveen weakened. "All right, take her!" he said. The price was \$375,000. By the time Hearst got home, he had begun to cool off about Henrietta, and he felt rather sheepish when he had to confess to Mrs. Hearst. "I've done a terrible thing," he said. "I've gone over to Joe Duveen's and bought a picture." And, he went on to say, he had paid \$375,000 for it. Mildly, Mrs. Hearst remarked that when *she* was upset, she just went out and bought a hat. However, when she saw the Van Dyck she liked it and told her husband to forget the whole thing.

The techniques of trading that the American millionaires had mastered were useless when pitted against Duveen's technique. Again and again, he stressed the point that it was easy to get fifty-thousand-dollar pictures but very hard to get pictures that cost a quarter of a million. An art-expert friend told Duveen that he

knew of an exquisite masterwork in London that could be bought very reasonably. "For how much?" Duveen asked. "I think you can get it for £300," his friend replied. "I really cannot afford to buy a picture that costs only £300," Duveen said.

While dining in a client's house, he was shocked to see hanging on the wall, among the Duveens, a beautiful picture by the French impressionist Monet. He professed an overwhelming love for it, and his client asked him what his love would come to in dollars. Duveen told him exactly what his love was worth, the deal was closed and Duveen took the picture home with him. It was never heard of again. To a close friend, Duveen admitted that it was in his basement. "I didn't want that fellow to get used to buying modern pictures," he said. "There are too many of them."

Toward the end of his life, Duveen said, "Except for Rembrandt and Hals, I'll never buy anything but Italians. I can sell any Rembrandt or Hals, no matter how homely, but when you get to the High Renaissance, you get physical beauty. My clients want physical beauty." Sometimes, however, he violated his own rule. He bought a "Mother and Child" by Reynolds because he thought it fine, even though the mother was homely, but his clients didn't want a homely mother. The picture was eventually sold at auction. It was bought by John G. Johnson, a Philadelphia lawyer, and now hangs in the Philadelphia Museum.

Duveen's clients not only disliked homely mothers but fat women. This created a coolness between them and the great Flemish painter Rubens, and made it difficult for Duveen to gratify his own fondness for that painter. In one instance, though, he did forget himself and buy a Rubens Madonna. When he had it cleaned, it proved to portray a nursing mother. Since his customers, in addition to not caring for homely mothers and fat women, didn't care for nursing mothers, Duveen was compelled to put that picture in his basement, too. He later discovered that his customers didn't care for homely pirates, either.

Over the years, Duveen's basement accumulated quantities of

nursing mothers and homely mothers and pirates and men without women; of pictures that had violated the seventh commandment; of Barbizons; of moderns. The basement's value became incalculable. "Sell your basement," his comptroller would plead. "Sell your basement and pay your debts." But Duveen was fond of his basement, and he was not aware of being in debt. It was once suggested that if he didn't want to sell the contents of the basement under his own name, he might turn the stuff over to Knoedler's, who would get an immense profit on it for him. He couldn't bear to let his prominent rival have a whack at his basement. "Why should I put Knoedler's in business with my stuff?" he asked. He quite ignored the fact that Knoedler's already *was* in business. To the end he clung to his basement.

AFTER his first transaction with Duveen, Samuel H. Kress, of the Kress stores, told a friend that he would never go to Duveen's again, because he objected to the Duveen prices. When, inevitably, he did go back, the friend said, "I thought you were never going back to Duveen's. What made you?"

"Because he's got things I can't get anywhere else," Kress said. He was stating a simple truth that each of Duveen's clients had to discover for himself.

Once, however, Duveen had to grant a great reduction to a customer. Mrs. Gilbert Miller, wife of the theatrical producer and a daughter of the financier Jules Bache, walked into Duveen's one day to have a look at some pictures her father contemplated buying. The pictures did not arouse joy in her heart. Somewhat hopelessly, she asked Duveen's assistant, Bertram Boggis, if there was anything around that was younger than four centuries. Boggis took her into another room and showed her Goya's "Don Manuel Osorio de Zúñiga" — the little Red Boy, which, in reproduction, has become one of the most popular pictures in the world. (See p. 257) Mrs. Miller fell in love. She went home and told her father that she could not face the future without the Red Boy.

Bache confided his daughter's passion to Duveen, who praised Mrs. Miller's taste and asked for \$275,000 to make the affair permanent. Bache consented at once.

Bache's son-in-law, Gilbert Miller, proved to be less grateful. In the first place, he stated flatly, no Goya was worth \$275,000. (The general public was less Goya-conscious then than it is now.) Also, he was haunted by a feeling that he had met this Red Boy before. Miller hunted around and found that the picture had once belonged to the wife of the French playwright Henry Bernstein. Miller went to see Bernstein. "Henry," he said, "I feel I've seen that picture." "Of course you've seen it," said Bernstein. "I used it as a prop in '*Le Galérie des Glaces*'" (a play of Bernstein's that ran in Paris in 1924, with Charles Boyer as its star). "How much did you get for that prop when you sold it?" Miller asked. Bernstein said that he and his wife had sold it to a Paris dealer for \$50,000. Miller and his wife went in triumph to her father; but Bache saw nothing wrong in Duveen's asking him \$275,000 for a \$50,000 picture.

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### *Madonna and Child*

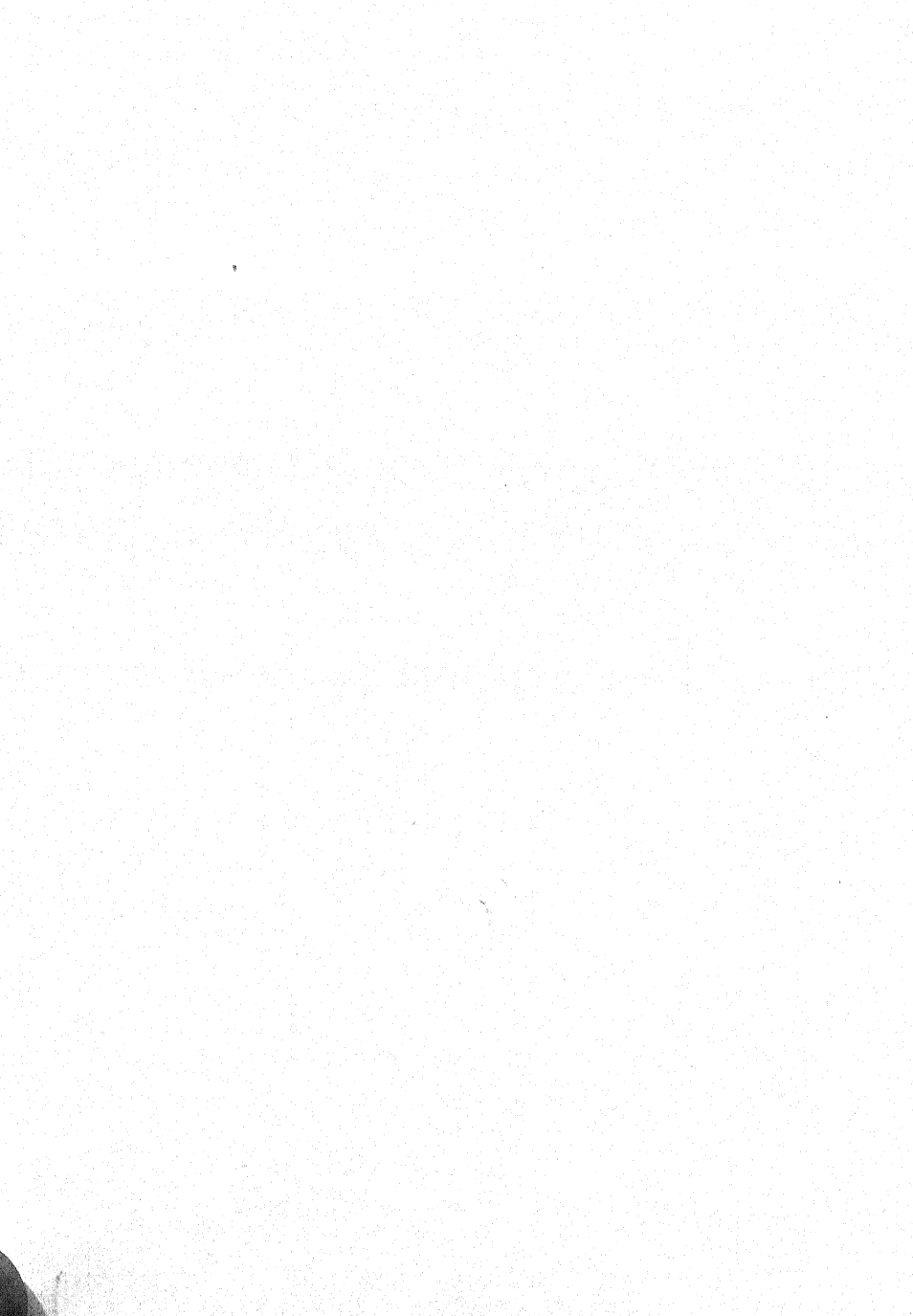
FRA FILIPPO LIPPI (circa 1406-1469), Florentine School

Courtesy of the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D. C.

(Kress Collection)

THE brilliantly gifted and worldly monk, Fra Filippo Lippi—often called simply Lippo Lippi—was born a butcher's son. Orphaned in childhood, he entered a brotherhood of Carmelite friars, but his monastic vows interfered with his secular inclinations and eventually he abandoned the cowl. After an adventurous, wandering career, during which he was said to have been captured by Barbary pirates, he settled down in Florence to paint his warmly human religious scenes: Madonnas who are not the agonized effigies of many earlier painters, but the sort of pensive, comely or domestic young ladies that Lippi saw around him. This particular Madonna, which is really a portrait, shows the painter's tender interest in a young Florentine woman, and his preoccupation with lovely vestments, carefully defined and colored.





Miller then called on Duveen and Duveen amiably reduced the price by \$115,000. This was the best he could do, he said, because he had had heavy expenses in the process of acquiring the picture. Miller again went to his father-in-law and presented this as stunning evidence that Duveen's services came high. "Under the circumstances, I don't think so," said Bache imperturbably. Miller inquired what these circumstances might be. Bache broke down and confessed. Years before, he had made a private deal with Duveen that if Duveen had an outstanding picture to offer him, he would pay him a flat 100-percent profit. Taking into account Duveen's expenses in getting hold of the Red Boy, the original price he had asked was fair. Miller blew up. "Why on earth did you make a deal like that?" he asked. Bache explained, and his explanation should certainly rank high in the annals of modesty. "Listen, Gilbert," he said, "Duveen has the greatest men in the world as his clients. He has Mellon. Why should he give a first-class picture to me when he can give it to Mellon?"

In this connection, Albert D. Lasker, the well-known advertising man, made a pertinent remark about his own early days as a picture buyer. "As a novice in collecting," he said, with a modesty not unlike Bache's, "I expected to have to pay the highest prices for masterpieces. What I did *not* expect, what I was to discover, was that I would also have to pay a large premium for the *privilege* of paying the highest prices!"

DUVEEN often lavished his knowledge on what he regarded as small fry. One of these, in Duveen's opinion, was John R. Thompson, of Chicago, owner of the well-known chain of one-arm restaurants. Thompson had begun to nibble at paintings through a Chicago art dealer, but as his chain of restaurants increased, so did his appetite for paintings. There came a time when the dealer's intuition told him that if he tried to keep Thompson to himself, he would lose a valuable customer. Duveen agreed to give the restaurant man an audience, and the dealer a com-

mission on any sales. "You mustn't be shocked by my tactics though," he warned.

Thompson, escorted by the Chicago dealer, presently appeared. He was a small man, wearing a derby hat. Duveen kept Thompson and the dealer waiting for an hour. Finally, the two men were admitted to the Presence. Duveen was brisk and genial. "I hear you are in the restaurant business," he said. "Anything like Lyons in England?" He went on to say that he approved of the Lyons tea-shops, and that if Thompson's chain resembled them, he approved of that. He revealed that he often went to a Lyons on Oxford Street in London.

He grew eloquent on the important social service rendered by those who provided good food at popular prices. He asked about the turnover in the Thompson restaurants and the problems of refrigeration. The restaurant business, it became clear, was Duveen's liveliest and most intimate concern.

"Look here," Thompson broke in desperately when he could stand the strain no longer, "I didn't make this trip to New York to talk to you about the restaurant business. I came to see you because I am interested in paintings!"

"Oh, paintings!" Duveen said, as if recalling an almost forgotten acquaintance. "Of course, paintings! Oh, well, now, if you're interested in pictures, come upstairs with me and I'll show you some."

The elevator bore them to sacrosanct upper regions. Duveen strode swiftly through a thickly carpeted, dimly lit room that contained six Old Masters reclining on easels. Thompson, in his wake, had almost passed through the room when, like Mrs. Lot, he looked back. He lingered; from the blur of the six pictures he got a quick impression of infinite desirability. He called the hurrying Duveen back. "Here are some pictures," he said. "What about these?"

Duveen took his arm. "My dear Mr. Thompson," he said gently, "there is nothing in this room that would interest you."



"Why not?" argued the new pupil. "Of course they interest me. What would I be doing here if they didn't interest me?"

"These pictures, my dear fellow, I am reserving, as a matter of fact, for a favorite client," Duveen said. "They will interest him far more than they could possibly interest you."

Thompson protested. "Why do you think they wouldn't interest me?" he asked. "I want you to know, Sir Joseph, that I own some pretty good pictures."

"I am sure you do," Duveen said soothingly. "And if you will just follow me, I am sure that I can add to your collection and, if I may say so, improve it. But not these. You are a busy man, and I don't want to waste your time. Not with these."

"Why not?" repeated Mr. Thompson.

Pushed to the wall, Duveen made it plain that he thought the pictures were over Thompson's head, both esthetically and economically.

"How much for the six?" Thompson demanded.

"A million dollars, I am afraid," said Duveen, as if pained at having to demonstrate the truth of an unflattering statement.

Thompson was ready with an answer. "I'll take them," he said vindictively.

### 3

**B**EHIND Duveen's virtuoso salesmanship operated his even more impressive process of financing. To this day people marvel that he was able over the years to keep his financial structure firm, his credit strong. He tied up immense amounts of capital in his inventory. In addition to the many millions he paid for single works of art, he bought eight large collections during his career, investing in them an estimated \$25,000,000. He carried some items on his books for more than three decades. Then, too, Duveen had to pay cash for what he bought, whereas he gave his

customers practically unlimited credit. He would allow paintings to hang in a client's house for years, and even when his clients got around to buying, he never hurried them for payment, and he never charged them interest. On top of that, it cost him half a million dollars a year just to run his three establishments, in New York, Paris and London.

Duveen has been called the world's greatest borrower. Fortunately, his credit was excellent. The Duveens always had their bankers as customers or close friends. A customer and great friend of the father's, for instance, was Lord Farquhar, the head of Parr's Bank in London. Early in the century, Parr's extended Duveen a credit of \$6,000,000, and it kept renewing this \$6,000,000 credit for the rest of Duveen's lifetime. In America, too, some of Duveen Brothers' major clients were bankers, or at least had banking influence. At one point, Morgan, who was thinking of buying \$2,000,000 worth of Duveen objects, was asked to give the Duveen firm that amount of credit at the Morgan institutions. This worked out beautifully for everyone. Morgan got the stuff on approval, and he knew that the firm wouldn't press him for cash. In the meantime, Duveen had the prestige of Morgan credit behind him.

Duveen never worried about money or about credit. He worried only about getting the most famous pictures in the world. In Duveen's grand financial strategy, he calculated in terms of his total life span. The final tally would not be in, he figured, until he had made his last sale and died. His strategy proved sound. It was not until 1937, after he put over his last great deal with Mellon, that Duveen liquidated his \$6,000,000 debt to his London bank. When he had made his very last sale, he was out of debt, and had \$15,000,000 in the bank, an inventory worth \$10,000,000 and his self-confidence intact.

To Duveen, money was merely a convenience. He was never petty about it. He once found himself mixed up in a claim made by an artist who had been engaged to do some work for him.

The artist kept asking for more and more pay until, at last, Duveen's comptroller gave him a check marked "In final payment." The artist accepted this check, cashed it, and then came back and asked for more money. The comptroller refused to give it to him, the artist brought suit, and Duveen spent several enjoyable days in court. (He said one time that he was sorry he hadn't become a lawyer, because he so loved a fight.) The case was thrown out, and Duveen and his comptroller left the courtroom together, flushed with victory. In the car on the way back, Duveen inquired what the amount involved was. The comptroller told him it was \$14,095. This minuscule sum had a quaint sound to Duveen. "Why quibble over \$14,095?" he asked. "Send him the money."

Duveen's own benefactions, public and private, were immense. Dr. Wilhelm von Bode, the German art critic and museum director who had advised Duveen on the purchase of his first collections, had by the late 1920's fallen on evil days; he was ill, poor, and going blind. When Duveen heard that von Bode was forced to put his art library up for auction, he sent two emissaries to Germany with instructions to make fabulous cross-bids for the books, so that von Bode would realize a handsome sum. This was one time when "rigging the market" had a pure, philanthropic impulse behind it. Later, Duveen's close friend Lord D'Abernon was in financial difficulties, and Duveen paid large prices for some of his paintings — paintings the dealer could never possibly dignify as "Duveens." Duveen also gave \$1,000,000 to the British Red Cross, presented to the British Museum the gallery for the celebrated Elgin Marbles, and made large gifts to the Tate Gallery and the National Gallery in London. All together, he gave away \$10,000,000, and his benefactions compared favorably with those of his great clients.

DUVEEN was a man of his time. It was a time of monopoly, and Duveen's career was dominated by his monopolistic drive. A

partnership that Duveen transmuted into a solo flight, for instance, involved the purchase of a Velásquez, "Infanta Maria Teresa." (See p. 261) Duveen knew that Harry Payne Bingham, its owner, had promised it to Knoedler's, for a very high price. He went to Charles R. Henschel, the head of Knoedler's, with the proposition that they buy it jointly. Duveen would put up all the money, and in return have the exclusive right to sell it. Henschel agreed. Duveen took the picture, and a long silence followed — two years of it. Henschel called on Duveen to ask him why he hadn't sold the picture. Duveen said blandly, "How can I sell it? I don't own it!" In order to make his sense of ownership complete, he was willing to pay Henschel a large sum. He didn't care in the least that the sum he had paid Henschel far exceeded his own profit on the transaction when, soon after, he sold the picture to Jules Bache. He had proved once more that an important picture could be bought only from him.

One rival dealer who suffered much from Duveen's grip on the art market recalls an occasion on which Duveen gave him a chance to retaliate. Duveen was as prodigal of talk as of money, and couldn't resist telling everybody—even his rivals—about his plans. He had gleefully announced to this rival that he was going to buy the Dreyfus Collection and he was going to buy it cheap—for \$1,000,000. As it happened, this dealer himself had been offered the Dreyfus Collection for \$1,000,000. Soon, Duveen found that the price of the collection was going up—to a million and a half, then to two and to three. He kept confiding his grievance to his rival. "Somebody is bidding the Dreyfus up on me," he said bitterly. The rival sympathized and, knowing that Duveen would never let the collection go, quickly went behind the scenes to bid it up some more. He forced Duveen to pay four and a half million for the Dreyfus Collection. "Somebody might ask," the dealer recently said, "why I didn't buy the collection myself when I could have had it for \$1,000,000. Well, there would have been no use whatever in my buying it, because I couldn't

have sold it. The only men in America rich enough to buy it from me were Duveen clients. Had I bought it, all Duveen would have had to say—and he could have tossed it off in the most casual way—would have been ‘Oh, yes, the Dreyfus. I know all about the Dreyfus. It was offered to me first, naturally. Had it been interesting, of course *I* would have bought it.’” Duveen had attained such power that the word “interesting,” properly inflected, would have killed any chance of selling the collection.

One way Duveen maintained his position was to make sure that no picture of his ever declined in price. When the industrialist, Elbert H. Gary, died, in 1927, Duveen was afraid that an auction of his art works, most of which had come from Duveen Brothers, might bring such low prices that business would be injured. He therefore offered to purchase the lot for a million and a half, cash. The offer was not accepted, so at the auction Duveen bought Gainsborough’s “Harvest Waggon,” paying \$360,000 for the picture, which he had sold to Gary for \$165,000. He persuaded several of his clients to buy, too. The sales totaled nearly two and a half million dollars, far more than Gary had spent on his collection.

It was by methods like these that Duveen kept up the prices of celebrated Old Masters and gradually set up his virtual monopoly. He both paid and got higher prices than other dealers, and he succeeded in selling the pictures for the very reason that he was willing to pay those higher prices. “You are a great man, and your name is magic,” he once said to Andrew Mellon. “But even *your* name won’t get you Duveen pictures.” He let that sink in. “Neither will *my* name get me Duveen pictures,” he continued, with rare modesty. “I get them because people know I will pay the highest prices in the world for them.” He paused for effect, then said, “*You* get them, Mr. Mellon, because *I* get them!”

DUVEEN loved walking, especially through and in front of art galleries. On his walks, he usually had with him a disciple or a

customer, whom he would harangue on his favorite topic — indeed, his only topic: art. The wares he saw displayed in the windows of competitors often stirred him to fury. He would pound the sidewalk with his walking stick, shouting, "Rot! Fake! Nonsense!" so loudly that passers-by would halt and marvel that a few daubs in a window could arouse such passion.

In all the years of Duveen's ascendancy, only one companion on his walks ever reversed Duveen's role and made the teacher the pupil. On these very special walks Duveen's instructor was Bernard Berenson, an American expatriate who lived, as he lives today, in Italy. For nearly half a century, Berenson, an almost legendary figure, has been generally acknowledged the foremost authority on Italian art of the Renaissance. In 1906, Duveen sought out Berenson and asked him to become his paid adviser on Italian pictures. Berenson would authenticate pictures for him and would tell him what pictures he considered worth buying. Duveen would give him an annual retaining fee and a commission on sales. Berenson accepted, on condition that he should have nothing whatever to do with the selling. This arrangement was to continue for 30 years.

Duveen had the practical man's contempt for the scholar. "Berenson may know what's authentic, but only I know what will sell," he would say, laughing. Berenson didn't care in the least what would sell; he was interested solely in what was beautiful.

For a long time, there hung in Duveen's London office a superb Masaccio that he had bought only because "B. B.", as Berenson is always called, was enthusiastic about it. The picture was somber. Duveen had some of his major customers in for a look at it and exercised his panegyrics on it. They didn't work. As the picture stayed on and on in his office, Duveen gradually conceived for it an aversion that amounted to hatred. One day he summoned his assistant, Bertram Boggis. "Get me an axe!" he said. "I want to chop up this picture." "Don't chop it up, Joe," Boggis said. "B. B. likes it." Duveen forced himself to look at

something more salable, to keep from destroying the masterpiece. Eventually, the adviser to an important collector, who had come upon a description of the picture in one of B. B.'s books, got his client to buy it.

That was as near as Berenson ever came to actually selling a picture. He gave one away, however, under spectacular circumstances. A big New York copra man, a collector of consequence, was about to make a business trip to the South Seas when he was told that Berenson was coming to the United States to catalogue a collection of Italian paintings. "Why doesn't he stay in my apartment?" he inquired of his informant. "It's all staffed, and I'll be going away just as he gets here." Berenson spent a month there, and felt so grateful to his host that he wrote to his wife in Italy asking her to send the copra man one of his pictures as a present—something "really nice." The catalogue finished, Berenson sailed for home. On his first evening back, he had a reunion with his pictures. "Where is the little Domenico Veneziano?" he asked his wife. "Oh," said Mrs. Berenson, "you told me to send a nice picture to your friend in New York, and I sent him that." When Berenson had recovered from the impact of his wife's obedience, he said, "I asked you to send him something nice. I didn't ask you to send him my very favorite." Copra took a slump, and Berenson's New York host sold his pictures. The Domenico Veneziano—it was "Saint John in the Desert"—was bought by Kress for \$450,000 and now hangs in the National Gallery in Washington. (See p. 267) Berenson's claim that he paid the highest month's rent in the annals of New York real estate may well be justified.

In 1913, one of Duveen's runners reported to him in Paris that the wife of an important Russian general owned a painting she believed to be the work of Leonardo da Vinci. Getting wind of a new da Vinci was like discovering a new planet; Duveen was aquiver. He invited the Russian lady to bring her painting to his gallery in the Place Vendôme. Duveen took her and the paint-

ing upstairs to a room where there was a small man with a magnifying glass. The man was Berenson—a fact Duveen did not mention to the lady. Berenson peered at the picture, then looked at it through a magnifying glass, then took it to the window. He finally put it down and gave Duveen the high sign. It was indeed a da Vinci. On the way down to Duveen's office, Berenson found an opportunity to tell him that it was a long-lost picture known as the "Benois Madonna."

Duveen was trying to woo the great collector Henry C. Frick away from Knoedler's at the time. Tingling with the realization of what he could do to Frick and to Knoedler's with this painting, he invited its owner to discuss a deal. She named the highest price ever asked for any picture in the history of art—one and a half million dollars. Then she explained that, under Russian law, she could not sell the painting until she had offered it to the Czar at the price she had quoted Duveen. A contract of sale, subject to an option to the Czar for a certain period, was signed, and Duveen sailed for America in a joyful humor. He told Frick what he was going to get him. The two men went through the motions of their daily lives waiting for the moment when the option would expire. Duveen was an ebullient man and Frick was a cool one, yet Frick's excitement far exceeded Duveen's.

Just before the option was to expire, a cable arrived from the owner of the picture saying that the Czar had met the quoted price. In the dawn of his bitter disappointment, Duveen realized that he had been used: the Russian lady had maneuvered him into providing a Berenson opinion for nothing.

THE WELDING of the personalities of Berenson and Duveen was an odd one. Duveen, bold and headlong, was the figurehead of a ship that carried as its sole passenger one of the most civilized and sensitive men in the world. Duveen told his clients: "Never buy an Italian picture without a Berenson approval! Never!" This was simply good business on Duveen's part. He had almost a



monopoly on the supply of Old Masters, and he thought he had a monopoly on Berenson, though no contract ever existed between them. When, from time to time, Berenson authenticated a picture for a rival dealer, Duveen felt betrayed.

On one occasion, the two men collided head on over a painting. A supper party was being given in B. B.'s honor by a New York banker and his wife who were well-known collectors. His hosts were bubbling with enthusiasm for a Botticelli they had just acquired, and they made haste to lead Berenson to it. He inspected it. "This is no Botticelli," he said. "Where did you get it?" "We got it from Duveen," said his host. "And he's coming to supper, too." Duveen arrived and was confronted with Berenson's disturbing denial. "Who told you this was a Botticelli?" asked Berenson gently. Duveen foamed authorities. "Nevertheless, it is not a Botticelli," B. B. said. Duveen at once offered to take the picture back and refund the money. The supper party was not a success.

Later, in the 1930's, Berenson disappointed Duveen in much more serious circumstances. He insisted that a picture Duveen was about to sell Mellon as a Giorgione was actually a Titian. There was a violent quarrel between the two men, and this ended their friendship and their business association. Among art dealers, the difference between Giorgione and Titian is immense; that is, the difference between what you can sell a Titian for and what you can sell a Giorgione for is immense. Titian lived to be 99 and was a hard worker, so his output was colossal. Giorgione, who was Titian's master and friend, died young, so there are very few Giorgiones.

When a familiar itch in his fingers told Duveen that he was about to put them on a highly regarded painting reputed to be by Giorgione — "The Adoration of the Shepherds," (See p. 271) owned by Viscount Allendale — he was wild with excitement. He went to Mellon and whipped up his enthusiasm. Then he sailed for England, pried the picture away from the Viscount for half a million dollars, and came right back with it. Duveen was

aware that B. B. had once said that the Allendale painting was a Titian. However, Berenson had been known to change his mind. Duveen, in his incorrigible optimism, was certain that Berenson would say that the Allendale was at least partly—that was all Duveen needed—by Giorgione. Berenson was in Cyprus when he received a long cable from Duveen asking him to admit that the picture was indeed a Giorgione. B. B. cabled an indignant refusal. When he returned to his famous villa, *I Tatti*, in Florence, one of Duveen's European representatives, accompanied by the picture itself, called upon him and repeated Duveen's request. Berenson studied it carefully for several days and came to the same conclusion as before; that it was an early Titian.

But Duveen already was gently ushering Mellon through the silken portieres of his salesmanship. He beautifully ensconced the Giorgione/Titian, all by itself, perched on an easel and reverently lighted, in a small, velvet-hung room in the Duveen palace on Fifth Avenue. Mellon had been almost completely sold on the picture in advance, and when he finally sat before it he was enraptured. Duveen wanted three quarters of a million dollars for it, but Mellon knew that when you were buying a Giorgione you couldn't quibble about price. At this ticklish point, Duveen's own methods recoiled on him. "What does B. B. say?" Mellon asked. "Never mind about that," Duveen replied sharply. "I say it's a Giorgione. *Everybody* says it's a Giorgione. And there isn't a doubt in the world that B. B. will say it's a Giorgione!"

Reassured, Mellon took the picture home. But when Berenson's certificate failed to materialize, he returned the picture to Duveen. The deal was off and so, in no time at all, was the business arrangement between Duveen and Berenson.

The infallible Berenson might fail Duveen, but not his own salesmanship. He was confident that he would sell the picture, and that it would end up in the projected National Gallery in Washington. The picture now hangs there, in the Kress Collection, and the label below it says that it is by Giorgione. The

controversy is no longer important. The picture is a great one, whoever painted it. To those who see it in the National Gallery, the battle over its authorship means as little as the Shakespeare vs. Bacon argument means to an audience at *Hamlet*.

Neither Duveen nor Berenson was ever quite the same after the breakup. Duveen never recovered from the separation; Berenson never recovered from the association. He still berates himself for having become an art expert. "In any other field, an expert means a man who knows something about his subject," he once said to a friend. "In any field except the field of art."

In his will, the recently widowed Berenson, who is childless, has left everything—his beautiful estate in Florence, his library of books and photographs, his pictures, and his money—to his alma mater, Harvard. It is a tremendous legacy, and for the last ten years the trustees of the university have been working on plans for its use. Not only Harvard men but promising students from other colleges will be encouraged to carry on their studies on one of the loveliest estates in Italy. *I Tatti* may become Harvard's most important cultural outpost.

DUVEEN had many dealings over the years with Collis P. Huntington, of the Southern Pacific and other railroads, and his nephew and heir, Henry E. Huntington, a man who had large holdings in Southern California real estate, street-car companies and utilities. Late in life, H. E. Huntington, who left his collection to found the Huntington Library and Art Gallery in San Marino, California, developed a liking for outstanding English paintings of the 18th century. Duveen, who had previously sold Mrs. Huntington paintings by Rembrandt, Velásquez, Hals, Bellini and other masters, was quite prepared to indulge this whim.

In the summer of 1921, Duveen sailed from New York on the *Aquitania* in a suite adjoining the one occupied by his friends the Huntingtons, who were in the Gainsborough Suite. In the dining room hung a reproduction of Gainsborough's "The Blue Boy."

(See p. 277) One evening, the Huntingtons invited Duveen to dine with them, and looking up, between courses, at the picture, H. E. became curious about it. In after years, Duveen enjoyed repeating the conversation that followed.

"Joe," said H. E., "who's the boy in the blue suit?"

Duveen said, "That is a reproduction of 'The Blue Boy.' It is Gainsborough's finest painting."

"Where's the original?" Huntington went on.

"It belongs to the Duke of Westminster and hangs in his collection at Grosvenor House in London."

"How much is it?" asked H. E.

Duveen was discouraging. "It can probably not be had at any price," he said. "It is the greatest work of England's greatest master and would be the crown of any collection of English pictures."

"What do you think would be the price if it ever *were* sold?" Huntington asked.

After a calculated hesitation, Duveen said it would probably be about \$600,000.

"I might see my way clear to paying that much," Huntington said.

Duveen knew many secrets about the owners of fine pictures, and his operatives had informed him that this happened to be a moment when the Duke of Westminster was definitely hard up. The Huntingtons, on their way to Paris, got off the *Aquitania* at Cherbourg; Duveen continued to Southampton, with the comfortable feeling of having sold at a neat profit a picture he didn't yet own. He deferred all his other engagements and called upon the Duke at Grosvenor House. He found him extremely receptive to the idea of selling "The Blue Boy," and anything else in the place. Duveen asked to see what was in stock. Three pieces fixed his attention — "The Blue Boy," Reynolds' "Sarah Siddons as the Tragic Muse," and Gainsborough's "The Cottage Door." Duveen bought them all, agreeing to pay cash within a few days. The price for the three pictures was slightly more than the figure he

had mentioned on the *Aquitania* for "The Blue Boy" alone.

The moment the deal was set, Duveen made for his London office and telephoned Huntington in Paris to tell him the good news. He had acquired "The Blue Boy" and would deliver it for \$620,000 — the \$20,000 covered the telephone call — but he needed the money as quickly as possible, because the Duke needed it as quickly as possible. Huntington asked for 48 hours. At the end of it, the Duke had his money.

Duveen went to Paris to deliver "The Blue Boy" in person. The Huntingtons were thrilled at seeing the original, but they were upset by the fact that the Duke's blue boy was more green than blue. Duveen explained that the greenish tinge was merely the result of a long accumulation of dust and grime. He subjected "The Blue Boy" to a professional scrubbing. This started a rumpus — the British newspapers accused him of vandalism — but Duveen enjoyed rumpuses.

It was, as a matter of fact, Duveen's habit to have an Old Master cleaned the moment he bought it. He was often accused of making Old Masters look like new masters. His answer was that they were new when they left the Old Master. An American lady once protested that the Renaissance painting of a girl he was trying to sell her had obviously been restored. "My dear Madam," he said, "if you were as old as this young girl, you would have to be restored, too."

Duveen showed the newly resplendent "Blue Boy" to Sir Charles J. Holmes, then director of the National Gallery in London. Sir Charles hailed him as "the savior of this monumental work," and went on: "For the first time in over a century, the world can see this masterpiece as the master intended it to be seen."

When "The Blue Boy" reached New York, escorted by two Duveen employes and triply encased — in a waterproof box, a steel box, and an ironbound case — the arrival was a headline story from coast to coast. The Metropolitan Museum begged Duveen for permission to exhibit it there for a while, but Duveen refused.

He didn't think the Metropolitan Museum was safe enough; after all, the Gainsborough had become a Duveen, and he couldn't trust a Duveen to a fragile, jerry-built structure like the Metropolitan. For a few weeks, he exhibited the Boy at his Fifth Avenue gallery, which was solid, and then he personally escorted him to California and to the Huntingtons.

## 4

**I**N 1934 Duveen was stricken with cancer, and he knew from the beginning that he could not recover. For much of his remaining five years, he had to have a nurse with him constantly, and, one by one, he gave up all his little indulgences. The only indulgence he did not give up was selling pictures; here his tempo, if anything, accelerated. To many individuals the approach of a deadline has a paralyzing effect; to rarer ones it is a stimulus. Duveen was like an aging painter who feels he has to complete a masterpiece in the brief time left him. Duveen's masterpiece, and from his point of view his monument, is the National Gallery of Art in Washington.

Even depressions had been lucky for Duveen, and so, finally, were the rising income and inheritance taxes. The era of big houses was ending and a new problem developed for Duveen's clients—a critical shortage of wall space. That, too, Duveen turned to his advantage. He saw before most people did that, between them, income taxes and inheritance taxes were going to make it impossible for men of wealth to buy art for themselves or leave collections to their heirs. But by earmarking purchases for museums, a collector could at least let art pass through his hands on the way. One after another of Duveen's clients—H. E. Huntington, Frick, Mellon, Bache, Kress—took up this form of philanthropy. For Duveen the advantage was double: he no longer had to worry about the passing of the big houses—the museums

were larger than the houses—and he no longer had to worry that the pictures would be dumped on the market at a time when it might be difficult for him to sell them.

It was late in his life, as in theirs, that Duveen met two men whom he was to help make almost as great collectors as he was himself: Andrew Mellon, the founder of the National Gallery, and Samuel H. Kress, the Gallery's most lavish contributor.

In the case of Mellon, the word "met" is inadequate. Duveen and Mellon moved in different social spheres. For Duveen to meet Mellon, a campaign was necessary. In his management of it, Duveen displayed that attention to detail that has distinguished the careers of other celebrated generals.

In a way, Duveen's determination to meet Mellon began with an extraordinary meeting, in 1920, with Henry Ford. For American art dealers, 1920 was a very bad year—so bad, in fact, that it forced the major dealers, for once, into solidarity. Even Duveen consented to merge his talents with the others. The combined art dealers—Duveen, Knoedler, Wildenstein, Seligman and Stevenson Scott—decided to make a mass assault on Henry Ford. He was an objective so big that there would be enough for them all, and too big, they felt, for just one of them to tackle.

The five dealers decided to prepare a list of the Hundred Greatest Paintings in the World and offer them to Ford; thus in one transaction they could convert America's richest man into America's outstanding collector. Each of the five dealers had persuaded himself that the paintings he owned were better than any owned by his rivals, and the task of selecting the hundred greatest resulted in many acrimonious debates, but finally the hundred paintings were agreed upon.

The pictures, each of which was accompanied by a scholarly text, were reproduced in three magnificent volumes; the dealers were going to present these books to Mr. Ford as an invitation to the dance. Representatives of the five firms, with the three magic books, went, by appointment, to Mr. Ford's home in Dear-

born, Michigan. Representing Duveen Brothers, as always, was Duveen himself. The international worldlings from New York were astonished at the simplicity of Ford's style of living; compared to Duveen's house on Madison Avenue, Ford's house was almost primitive. Mr. Ford was unaffectedly pleased to meet them, and when they displayed the superb volumes, his delight was immeasurable. He jumped up and called Mrs. Ford in to share his enthusiasm.

"Mother, come in and see the lovely pictures these gentlemen have brought," he said, as Duveen later told the story. Mrs. Ford came in and admired the books as much as her husband had.

"Yes, Mr. Ford," said Duveen, the spokesman for the delegation, "we thought you would like them. These are the pictures we feel you should have."

Ford teetered between admiration and possession. "Gentlemen," he said, "beautiful books like these, with beautiful colored pictures like these, must cost an awful lot!"

"But, Mr. Ford, we don't expect you to *buy* these books," Duveen hastened to explain. "We got them up specially for you, to show you the pictures. These books are a present to you."

Ford turned to his wife. "Mother, did you hear that?" he said. "These gentlemen are going to give me these beautiful books as a present. Yes, gentlemen," he continued, "it is extremely nice of you but I really don't see how I can accept a beautiful, expensive present like this from strangers."

For perhaps the first time in his life, Duveen was inarticulate. When at last he found speech, he explained the books had been got up to interest Ford in buying originals of the pictures. At this revelation Ford's amazement vanished and he became again a man of business. "But, gentlemen," he said, "what would I want with the original pictures when these are so beautiful?"

THIS FIASCO left the four other dealers in a state of dejection from which they did not recover for some time, but for Duveen



it was just tonic. Attributing his failure with Ford to his having broken his own rule against combining forces with other dealers, he decided to turn his attentions to the biggest potential collector of them all: Mellon. Mellon had never bought anything from Duveen; he was a confirmed client of Duveen's greatest rival, Knoedler's. Duveen was even advised by a friend to give up any idea of selling Mellon; the advice contained a strong hint that there was something about Duveen that the aristocratic Mellon would find uncongenial. "Not only will Mellon buy from me but he will buy *only* from me," Duveen replied.

What proved to be as helpful as anything else in enabling him to gain the coveted entree to Mellon was Duveen's unusual friendliness. He wore friendliness like a nimbus, and scattered largesse with a touching faith in the emotion of gratitude.

Duveen was especially generous to the household staffs of his clients. He was aware that he caused servants a lot of extra work. When he felt that a room needed what he called "lifting," he would refurnish it entirely, and the hanging of his pictures was an intricate ceremonial, which he supervised in detail. All this meant shifting and heaving and wiring for the staffs, and Duveen rewarded them liberally. One butler in a Fifth Avenue house that stocked Duveens put in so much overtime that, before he retired, his emoluments from Duveen totaled over a hundred thousand dollars.

Servants developed a feeling that it was only fair to transmit to this generous nobleman any information that might interest him: what rival dealers had the effrontery to offer works of art to their masters, what purchases the masters were considering; in short, all the relevant gossip. Duveen's generosity even extended to the household staffs of people who were not clients of his but merely potential clients. Eventually, his circle of friends included almost every valet and butler of any distinction whatever.

When at last the moment came for Duveen to meet Mellon, he found himself rewarded for this democratic friendliness. For one

thing, although Mellon knew very little about Duveen, aside from the fact that he didn't want to deal with him, Duveen was thoroughly informed about Mellon. For another thing, the mechanics of the meeting were much simpler than they would have been had Duveen been an unfriendly man.

The meeting was effected by a delicate feat of coördination. In 1921, Mellon, visiting London, occupied a suite on the third floor of Claridge's. Duveen had a permanent suite on the fourth floor of Claridge's, but he had himself moved to the floor below Mellon. Duveen's valet was, inevitably, a friend of Mellon's valet. One afternoon, Duveen was apprised by his valet that Mellon's valet was helping Mellon on with his overcoat and was about to start down the corridor with him to ring for the lift. Duveen's valet hastily performed the same services for Duveen. The timing of the valets was so exquisite that Duveen stepped into the descending lift that contained Mellon.

Duveen was not only surprised, he was charmed. "How-do-you-do, Mr. Mellon?" he said, and introduced himself, adding, as he later recalled, "I am on my way to the National Gallery to look at some pictures. My great refreshment is to look at pictures." Taken unawares, Mellon admitted that he, too, was in need of a little refreshment. They went to the National Gallery together, and after they had been refreshed, Mellon discovered that Duveen had an inventory of Old Masters of his own that, although smaller than the museum's, was, Duveen thought, comparable in quality. Soon he gave Mellon, as he gave all his clients, the sensation of, in H. G. Dwight's words, "intoxicating triumphs" to come.

The personalities of Duveen and Mellon were widely disparate. Duveen blurted out everything. To call Mellon laconic was to accuse him of garrulity. Although Duveen got what he wanted that day in the lift in Claridge's, although Mellon finally became his best customer, Duveen had to pay a high price, because Mellon, by not talking, made him suffer acutely. In an impulsive, indiscreet moment, a rival art dealer once heard himself saying

to Mellon, "Duveen tells me you drive him crazy because he never knows what you feel about things. He says he can never get a word out of you." At this testimony to his inscrutability, Mellon permitted himself a smile, unaccompanied by speech.

During the 1920's, Duveen moved cautiously with Mellon. He was satisfied to sell him one or two pictures at a time, and to put up with the fact that Mellon still saw a great deal of Knoedler's. But Duveen had begun to plant in Mellon's mind the suggestion that he would found a national art gallery in Washington.

Toward the end of the decade, with a view to making a start toward filling up the gallery of his imagination, Duveen, hearing that the Soviet Government was eager to sell some of its famous collection of paintings in the Hermitage Gallery, went over to have a look at them. The Soviet Government proved to be the first seller in his experience whose price he did not care to meet, especially since Mellon was the only potential purchaser, and Mellon had not seen the pictures. Duveen contented himself with telling Mellon about the expensive opportunity.

After several years of negotiation, Mellon, in 1930 and 1931, using Knoedler's, bought twenty-one of the Hermitage paintings for seven million dollars. For Raphael's "Alba Madonna" alone he paid over \$1,100,000.

To anybody else, Mellon's purchase of the Hermitage pictures through Knoedler's would have been a lethal blow. After it had been announced, a rival dealer came to offer Duveen some gloating consolation. He was startled to find Duveen radiant. "Mellon has arrived," Duveen said. "He's ready for *me*." He knew that Mellon could make no more such purchases except from him; there was no other source of supply. In congratulating Mellon on his acquisition, he said, "These pictures are wonderful, but let me remind you, Mr. Mellon, that you paid Duveen prices."

David E. Finley, of the National Gallery, recalls that when the paintings finally arrived in Washington, they were put in a vault in the Corcoran Gallery. Finley has said that Mellon would

retire there to commune with "treasures like Raphael's 'Alba Madonna,' and his 'Saint George and the Dragon,' the second of which cost \$745,000; Botticelli's 'The Adoration of the Magi' (See p. 281), which cost \$838,350; Jan van Eyck's 'The Annunciation,' which cost \$503,010; and Titian's 'Venus with a Mirror' — a very nude painting that Mellon never would have hung in his home — which cost \$544,320." Finley has said that Mellon had strict ideas about what could be hung in one's home; he "did not care for nudes, and he was careful not to hang religious pictures in a room where his friends might be smoking and drinking."

During the early '30's Duveen, quietly plugging away at his plans for a national gallery, sold Mellon art on a grander and grander scale. Then, in the spring of 1934, the Government asked Mellon for \$3,089,000 for back income taxes and penalties for the year 1931. Mellon made a counterclaim that in 1931 he had, in fact, overpaid his taxes by \$139,000. The Government's case against Mellon was enormously complicated. The nub of the defense was that in 1931 Mellon, without talking about it, had given more than three million dollars' worth of pictures to the Mellon Trust, a foundation he had set up the year before for charitable purposes: that though these works of art were still privately displayed, it had for years been his intention to turn them over to the nation as soon as he had enough to provide a decent start for a national gallery he was planning to give the American people.

To prove that Mellon had had this intention even earlier than 1931, Mellon's counsel called to their aid the man who had shared this intention with him — Duveen.

Duveen's lawyers had despaired of him as a witness: he never saw any reason, even in a courtroom, to curb his habit of talking too much. But on this one occasion, even they later admitted, Duveen acquitted himself nobly. Duveen entered the courtroom with the assurance of a popular comedian. He made a broad introductory statement about the Mellon Duveens. "The ex-Secretary's collection," he said concisely, "is the finest in the universe."

The opposing counsel, Robert H. Jackson, had evidently peeked into Duveen's income-tax reports as well as into Mellon's, for he replied by asking Duveen whether it was not true that his art firm had lost \$2,950,000 in 1930 and 1931. Duveen looked at him pityingly. "I've never asked for the last 15 years what I've made or what I've lost," he said. "I'm simply not interested." Jackson asked about Raphael's "Cowper Madonna" which he had sold Mellon. This turned out to be an example of Mellon's shrewdness; he had wrested it from Duveen for \$836,000. "I thought it a very low price. Mr. Mellon thought it a very high price. One day after lunch, I gave way," said Duveen. Most importantly, Duveen testified that as early as 1928 he had discussed with Mellon the project of a national gallery to house the art treasures he was helping get together for him.

Duveen's testimony did much to dispel the sinister atmosphere that surrounded the case. In a dramatic fashion, Duveen's pictures — which he had always told his clients they were getting cheap no matter how much they paid for them — rallied to Mellon in his dark hour. In the end, the Board of Tax Appeals exonerated him of the Government's charges.

The end of the tax hearings in Washington left Duveen in a handsome position; the idea of the National Gallery was now out in the open. Duveen's only problem was how to provide Mellon with the works needed to give the gallery a decent start. In 1936, for the second time in his dealings with Mellon, Duveen decided to take an apartment directly below his, this time in Washington. As he later recounted, he said to Mellon one day, "I have some beautiful things for you, things you ought to have. You don't want to keep running to New York to see them; I haven't the energy to keep running to Washington. I shall arrange matters so that you can see these things at your leisure." Then, in an allusion to the National Gallery, he added, "Of course, these things don't really belong to us. They belong to the people." Mellon lived in an apartment house near Dupont Circle. Duveen prevailed upon

the family living below Mellon to transfer its lease to him. He installed a caretaker, moved in the wonderful things, engaged several guards, gave Mellon the key, and went back to New York.

In New York, while waiting for the silent potentate to make up his mind, Duveen decided to have some fun at the expense of a potentate who was not silent at all, Adolf Hitler. Duveen thought that except for Holbein and Dürer, German art was gross and tasteless. In speaking of German pictures, he was repeatedly able to employ his favorite epithet for a picture he didn't like — "vulgar." Hitler had deplored the fact that so many German artists had been displaced, in museums and private collections, by decadent Italians.

Working under cover of an English firm of unblemished Aryan genealogy — a firm that, in turn, employed a similarly impeccable Dutch concern — Duveen furnished the funds to funnel back into Germany early German art works, which came quite cheap, in exchange for the decadent Italians. He thus managed to abduct from the very walls of the Kaiser Friedrich Museum, in Berlin, and the Alte Pinakothek, in Munich, among other prominent German museums, some of the finest examples of Italian art — a Duccio di Buoninsegna, a Fra Filippo Lippi Madonna (See p. 287), a Raphael, and the like.

Meanwhile, Duveen kept in touch with his caretaker in Washington. The caretaker confided that the tenant on the upper floor, in dressing gown and carpet slippers was leaving his own apartment to bask in Duveen's. Sometimes, the caretaker reported, Mellon found it more agreeable to entertain guests in Duveen's place than in his own. There came a moment when Mellon sent for Duveen and bought the contents of his apartment, lock, stock and barrel. This was the largest transaction ever consummated in the world of art. Duveen had easily outdone the Soviets. There were 21 items in the Soviet deal, 42 in Duveen's. Mellon paid the Soviets seven million dollars; he paid Duveen twenty-one million. Duveen was able to liquidate a credit of six million dollars his

London bank had been extending him for thirty years and to arrange trust funds for his wife and daughter.

A few months after Duveen sold Mellon the apartment in Washington, Mellon wrote President Roosevelt offering to build a national art gallery and give it to the nation, along with his entire collection and a five-million-dollar endowment fund. As soon as the President and Congress had, in March of 1937, formally accepted the National Gallery in the name of the American people — 19,000,000 of whom have since visited it — Duveen called in John Russell Pope, the architect, to draw up plans.

Duveen had a prejudice against limestone. He thought it was dirty. Mellon, however, had made up his mind to build the Gallery of limestone, for which he had a noticeable fondness. President Coolidge had put Mellon in charge of a District of Columbia architectural program, and Mellon had chosen limestone for one Government building after another. Duveen arranged a conference with Mellon and Pope, and praised marble. Pope said marble would cost at least five million dollars more. Mellon said that that was much too expensive. Duveen suggested an automobile ride around Washington. As they rode, he pointed out to Mellon many Government buildings of limestone. They looked shabby and dirty, or Duveen said they did. Finally Mellon yielded, and agreed to marble. "Thanks for the ride," he said. "It has been the most expensive ride of my life."

"Why did you make such a fuss about the marble?" someone asked Duveen. "What difference does it make? Besides, Mellon will have five million less to spend with you."

"I'll have other customers besides Mellon," Duveen said. "They'll want *their* pictures in the National Gallery." Foremost among the customers he had in mind was Samuel Kress.

Kress wouldn't consent to deal with Duveen until after Mellon was dead because Mellon, as far as Duveen was concerned, was No. 1. Mellon died in 1937. Immediately afterward Duveen managed to convey to Kress that he had the stature to make himself

No. 1 with Duveen. With Duveen's assistance, Kress could drastically increase the contents of the National Gallery.

Everything worked here for Duveen, including Mellon's modest decision not to have his name put on the Gallery. Mellon did not believe in the value of this kind of personal fanfare; he told an intimate that although the Smithsonian Institution was named after James Smithson, not one man in a million could tell you who under the sun Smithson was. Kress had bought so much art that he had planned at one time to build a gallery of his own. But the National Gallery, because it was national, was better.

Kress prepared himself carefully for his bargaining sessions with Duveen once he became a client. Like all the other big clients, he was a slow talker and a slow decider. He had photographs taken of the pictures he was considering, and pondered them endlessly. Year after year, he went to Europe and trudged the galleries. He was eternally asking questions of anyone whose opinion he valued. "Why is this picture so good?" he would ask. "Why is it better than the picture by the same artist that So-and-So has? What makes it worth so much? I'm told it's been repainted. Which part has been repainted? Has that cloud in the upper left-hand corner been repainted or is that the original cloud? With all that repainting, should I pay so much?" The interrogation went on continuously.

In terms of sheer quantity, Kress finally became the biggest customer of Duveen's entire career, even though everything he bought was bought in the last two years of Duveen's life. Before Duveen died, he had sold Kress more than 20 million dollars' worth of art.

IN THE long line of Duveen's clients, beginning with Morgan, Altman, and the Huntingtons, and ending grandly with Mellon and Kress, the banker Henry Goldman occupied a special position, between the exit of the former group and the entrance of the latter. After Goldman's retirement, he and Duveen often met for



lunch at the St. Regis Hotel. Goldman was hungry to hear about Duveen's activities: What had Duveen bought, to whom was he selling it, and for how much? Goldman was entranced with Duveen's stories; alongside Duveen's great clients, he modestly regarded himself as a minor one and he delightedly absorbed the detailed stories of how Duveen played the big fish and netted them.

Goldman gradually became blind in his later years. It is an instance of Duveen's capacity for disinterested friendship that after Goldman was totally blind and was no longer buying pictures, Duveen continued to see him constantly. One Christmas, Duveen gave him two Holbein miniatures that the old collector had long loved. This gift brought Goldman enormous joy, even though he could not see it.

Duveen's frequent visits meant much to Goldman in his last days. He would ask, when Duveen was late, "Isn't Joe coming?" But Joe always did come. Sometimes he expounded on the beauty of the two Holbeins with as much enthusiasm as if he were selling them, and the old gentleman reveled in his unseen vision.

Many Duveen clients became either totally blind, or very nearly so, among them not only Goldman but Altman, Mrs. Huntington, and, in recent years, Kress. The fact that for them the pictures he sold them were invisible or almost invisible did not in the least deter them from buying. An art critic, returning from Washington, where he had just inspected the Kress pictures in the National Gallery, sat by their donor's bedside and praised him for contributing to the nation a beauty he could no longer see. Kress's face lit up with pleasure, perhaps from his memory of a time when he had beheld the beauty.

The great money men of the Duveen era often gradually came to accept Duveen's view that art was more important than money. One theory is that Duveen had inculcated the idea that art was priceless: that when you pay for the infinite with the finite, you are indeed getting a bargain. Perhaps it was for this reason that they felt better when they paid a lot for their art. It gave them the

assurance of acquiring genuineness, rarity, uniqueness. One of Duveen's rivals had a Rossellino bust for which he had paid twenty-two thousand dollars. Joseph E. Widener went in to look at it. The dealer offered it for twenty-five thousand, thinking to tempt Widener into a quick purchase. The moderateness of the price was fatal. "Find me a better one," said Widener. Duveen would have asked a quarter of a million, and got it. Another dealer offered a room to Hearst for fifty thousand dollars; Hearst spurned it. Duveen sold it to him later for two hundred thousand.

Many millionaires of the Duveen Era found that their works of art became as dear as children. Toward the end of Joseph E. Widener's life, before his pictures, which he had presented to the National Gallery, were packed and sent off, he made the rounds and had a long, last look at each of them. He had arranged for them to have a good home and he knew they would be well cared for, but now that they were about to leave him, he was like a father losing his children, and he wept.

EVERYONE who saw Duveen in the last five years of his life speaks of his extraordinary equanimity in the face of his frightful affliction. Osbert Sitwell has said that it was always Duveen's chief concern that everyone he came in contact with should have a good time. Both Berenson and Kenneth Clark, one-time Director of the National Gallery in London, have said that he was one of the best storytellers they ever met. All during his illness, Duveen kept up the amiability and the storytelling. He would never admit that he was more than mildly ill. Something of a gourmet, he would account for the fact that he hardly ate anything by saying that the doctor had put him on "a bit of a diet." A chain smoker now forbidden to smoke, he worked out an ingenious device for keeping people from offering him cigarettes; he had an imitation cigarette made of ivory, with an imitation light at the end of it made of phosphorus, and kept it constantly in his hand or between his lips, so that he would appear to be

smoking. Although he needed daily medical attention, he pursued his ordinary activities as if he were only slightly indisposed.

Duveen's death was, in characteristic fashion, beautifully timed. When Neville Chamberlain returned from Munich, Duveen, believing that he actually had preserved peace in our time, acclaimed him as the greatest man in the world. Four months after Duveen's death, his country was at war. The holiday was over, but Duveen had lived to the last minute of it. In the years that followed, the outstanding collectors were Hitler and Göring, who never had to pay Duveen prices.

For Duveen to praise Chamberlain required a certain detachment, for the Prime Minister had refused to let him continue as a trustee of the London National Gallery. What precipitated this decision was an offer by Duveen to sell the Gallery eight Sassetta panels. Chamberlain and some members of the board felt that Duveen should not be in the position of offering to the Gallery as a seller works that, representing the Gallery, he had to approve as a buyer. The dismissal hurt Duveen deeply. Then, in Duveen's last year, Kress couldn't make up his mind about a considerable quantity of merchandise he had on consignment. Kress was going through the old routine of having everything photographed and asking questions. This, too, disturbed Duveen.

On May 17, 1939, Duveen sailed from New York for what he called home. The day before, he telephoned one of his assistants and asked him to drive through Central Park with him. At 72nd Street, Duveen proposed that they get out of the car and walk, but after a few steps he had to sit down on a bench. He was mortally ill, and looked it. Nevertheless, he asked his associate to help him tackle a new and formidable project.

The Widener Collection had been offered to the National Gallery, and it was Duveen's understanding that the Gallery was going to reject the donation. The Gallery, he had heard, was prepared to accept Widener's paintings and sculptures but did not want the tapestries, armor and other miscellany, which it felt were

outside the Gallery's scope. Widener wouldn't agree to split up his collection. Duveen proposed to his associate that the firm buy the entire Widener Collection. He would sell the paintings and the sculptures to the National Gallery at the price he would pay Widener for everything. The rest of the collection would cost him nothing; whatever he could sell it for would be velvet.

"How much do you think it will take to swing this?" Duveen's associate asked. "Twenty-five million dollars," said Duveen calmly. He instructed his man to get going immediately and to send progress reports to him in London. He also reminded him to keep after Kress about the unsold pictures.

Eight days after Duveen sailed, he died, at Claridge's. His last words, addressed to his nurse, were "Well, I fooled 'em for five years." The funeral services were held in his London gallery. Duveen's last letter, written on shipboard, arrived in New York the day after his death. It urged his associates to expedite the Widener deal — a deal that never was to be consummated, for the National Gallery decided to meet Widener's terms on the donation. Two years after Duveen died, Kress bought all the pictures that had been hanging fire. Duveen went right on selling.



S. N. Behrman



S. N. BEHRMAN, whose name has long been identified with the best in sophisticated comedy, was born in Worcester, Mass. Interested in the theater from an early age, he wrote and appeared in a vaudeville skit in New York before he was 20. In 1927, 11 years after graduation from Harvard, Behrman scored his first great hit on Broadway, *The Second Man*. Press notices applauded "the spectacular emergence of a mature comedy talent."

Since then Behrman has remained in the front rank of American dramatists. The most celebrated figures of the stage have starred in his plays: Alfred Lunt and Lynn Fontanne in *Amphitryon 38* and *The Pirate*, Katharine Cornell in *No Time for Comedy*, Alexander Woollcott in *Brief Moment*, Jane Cowl, Ina Claire, Ruth Gordon, and others. Between Broadway productions, Behrman has worked in Hollywood on screen plays and dialogue for such outstanding movies as *Queen Christina*, *A Tale of Two Cities*, and the current *Quo Vadis*.

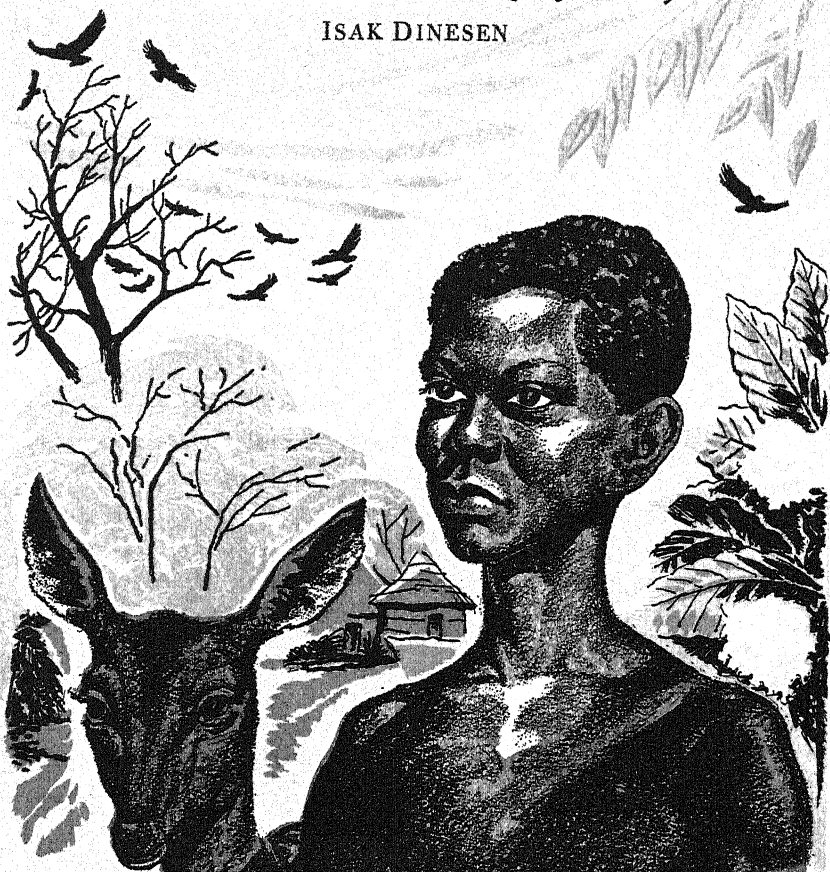
*Duveen* is a departure from Behrman's chosen field of the drama, but in presenting Sir Joseph he has sustained his high reputation for witty and skillful characterization.

*Illustrations by Edward Shenton*


# Kamante and Lulu

*A condensation from "Out of Africa" by*

ISAK DINESEN



*"Out of Africa," copyright 1938 and published in the Modern Library edition at \$1.25 by Random House, Inc., 457 Madison Ave., New York 22, N. Y. Distributed in Canada by Putnam & Co., Ltd.; Agents: McClelland & Stewart, Ltd., 215 Victoria St., Toronto, Ont.*

AMANTE, the Kikuyu boy, and Lulu, a bushbuck antelope, lived on Isak Dinesen's 6000-acre African plantation, set almost on the equator. They were, says the author, a sort of Beauty and the Beast. Kamante was a wise, poignant and grotesque little figure, with knobby legs, thin body and massive head. Lulu was as lovely as a young princess, with her silky ears, her delicately rounded body, her tiny feet. The touching story of their relationship is unforgettable for its deep understanding of boy and of fawn, and for its glowing impressions of Africa.

Here are the herds of giraffe, like "long-stemmed speckled, gigantic flowers," the lions "drawing a dark wake in the grass," the air that is "alive like a flame burning." Here, too, interwoven with the story of Kamante and Lulu, are the fascinating day-to-day problems of a lone European woman among hundreds of native workers.

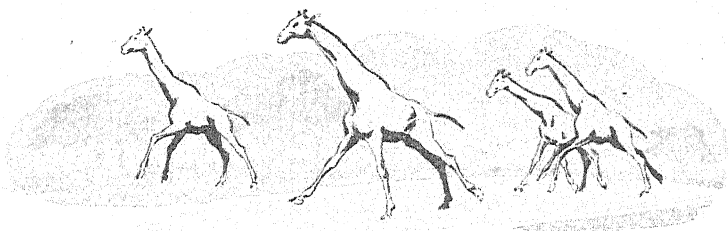
Reading *Kamante and Lulu* makes it clear why Isak Dinesen's *Out of Africa*, from which it is drawn, is now widely considered a little classic of our times.

"Isak Dinesen expands the story exquisitely, so that each detail of it shines through her splendid prose . . . her book has a solid core of beauty in it and a cadenced, graceful style."

— Hassoldt Davis in *The Saturday Review of Literature*

"She gives you a feeling for Africa and its people in prose as strong and beautiful as the landscape itself." — *Scholastic*





I HAD a farm in Africa, six thousand acres, at the foot of the Ngong Hills. The equator runs across these highlands, a hundred miles to the north, and the farm lay at an altitude of over six thousand feet. In the daytime you felt that you had got high up, near to the sun, but the early mornings and evenings were limpid and restful, and the nights were cold.

The geographical position, and the height of the land, combined to create a landscape that had not its like in all the world. There was no fat on it and no luxuriance anywhere; it was Africa distilled up through six thousand feet, like the strong and refined essence of a continent. The colors were dry and burnt, like the colors in pottery. The trees had a light delicate foliage. The grass was spiced like thyme and bog myrtle; in some places the scent was so strong that it smarted in the nostrils. The sky was pale blue or violet, with a profusion of mighty, weightless, ever-changing clouds towering up and sailing on it. But the chief feature of the landscape was the air. In the middle of the day the air was alive over the land, like a flame burning; it scintillated, waved and shone like running water, mirrored and doubled all objects, and created great mirages. Up in this high air you breathed easily, drawing in a vital assurance and lightness of heart. In the highlands you woke up in the morning and thought: Here I am, where I ought to be.

From the Ngong Hills you have a unique view over the vast plains of the great game country that stretches all the way to Kilimanjaro. Before I took over the management of the farm, I

had been keen on shooting and had been out on many safaris. But when I became a farmer I put away my rifles. Out on the safaris, I had seen a herd of buffalo, one hundred and twenty-nine of them, come out of the morning mist under a copper sky, one by one, as if the dark and massive, ironlike animals with the mighty horizontally swung horns were not approaching, but were being created before my eyes and sent out as they were finished. I had seen a herd of elephant traveling through dense native forest, where the sunlight is strewn down between the thick creepers in small spots and patches, pacing along as if they had an appointment at the end of the world. I had time after time watched the progression across the plain of the giraffe, in their queer, inimitable, vegetative gracefulness, as if it were not a herd of animals but a family of rare, long-stemmed, speckled gigantic flowers slowly advancing. I had seen the royal lion, before sunrise, below a waning moon, crossing the gray plain on his way home from the kill, drawing a dark wake in the silvery grass, his face still red up to the ears; or during the midday siesta, when he reposed contentedly in the midst of his family on the short grass and in the delicate, springlike shade of the broad Acacia trees of his park of Africa.

All these things were pleasant to think of when times were dull on the farm.

WE GREW coffee on my farm. The land was in itself a little too high for coffee and it was hard work; we were never rich on the farm. But a coffee plantation is a thing that gets hold of you and does not let you go, and there is always something to do on it: you are generally just a little behind with your work.

There are times of great beauty on a coffee farm. When the plantation flowered in the beginning of the rains, it was a radiant sight, like a cloud of chalk, in the mist and the drizzling rain. The coffee blossom has a delicate slightly bitter scent, like the blackthorn blossom. When the field reddened with the ripe ber-

ries, all the women, and the children, whom they call the tolos, were called out to pick the coffee off the trees, together with the men; then the wagons and carts brought it down to the factory near the river where the big coffee drier turned and turned, rumbling the coffee in its iron belly with a sound like pebbles that are washed about on the seashore. Sometimes the coffee would be dry, and ready to take out of the drier in the middle of the night. That was a picturesque moment, with many hurricane lamps in the huge dark room of the factory that was hung everywhere with cobwebs and coffee husks, and with eager glowing dark faces, in the light of the lamps, round the drier.

Later on the coffee was hulled, sorted by hand and packed in sacks. Then in the early morning, while it was still dark, and I was lying in bed, I heard the wagons, loaded high up with coffee sacks, 12 to a ton, with 16 oxen to each wagon, starting on their way in to Nairobi railway station up the long factory hill, with much shouting and rattling, the drivers running beside the wagons. I was pleased to think that this was the only hill up, on their way, for the farm was a thousand feet higher than the town of Nairobi. In the evening I walked out to meet the procession that came back, the tired oxen hanging their heads in front of the empty wagons, with a tired little toto leading them, and the weary drivers trailing their whips in the dust of the road. Now we had done what we could do. The coffee would be on the sea in a day or two, and we could only hope for good luck at the big auction sales in London.

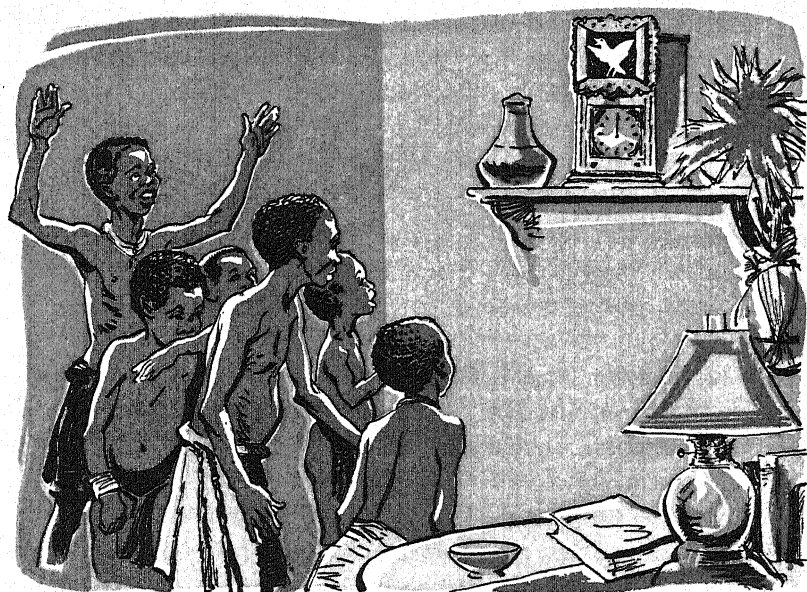
From my first weeks in Africa, I had felt a great affection for the natives. It was a strong feeling that embraced all ages and both sexes. The discovery of the dark races was to me a magnificent enlargement of all my world.

But it was not easy to get to know them. They were quick of hearing, and evanescent; if you frightened them they could withdraw into a world of their own, in a second, like the wild animals which at an abrupt movement from you are gone — simply are

not there. Until you knew a native well, it was almost impossible to get a straight answer from him. To a direct question as to how many cows he had, he had an eluding reply: "As many as I told you yesterday." It goes against the feelings of Europeans to be answered in such a manner; it very likely goes against the feelings of the natives to be questioned in this way. If we pressed or pursued them to get an explanation of their behavior out of them, they receded as long as they possibly could, and then they used a grotesque humorous fantasy to lead us on the wrong track. Even small children in this situation had all the quality of old poker players, who do not mind if you overvalue or undervalue their hand, so long as you do not know its real nature.

On the farm, my acquaintance with the natives developed into a settled and personal relationship. We were good friends. I reconciled myself to the fact that while I should never quite know or understand them, they knew me through and through, and were conscious of the decisions that I was going to take before I was certain about them myself. For some time I had a small farm up at Gil-Gil, where I lived in a tent, and I traveled by the railway to and fro between Gil-Gil and Ngong. At Gil-Gil, I might make up my mind very suddenly, when it began to rain, to go back to my house. But when I came to Kikuyu, which was our station on the railway line, and from where it was ten miles to the farm, one of my people would be there with a mule for me to ride home on. When I asked them how they had known that I was coming down, they looked away and seemed uneasy, as if frightened or bored, such as we would be if a deaf person insisted on getting an explanation of a symphony from us.

I had in my dining room an old German cuckoo clock. A clock was really of no use on the farm, where the sun told time closely enough, but this was a very fine clock. In the midst of a cluster of pink roses, at every full hour, a cuckoo flung up its little door and threw itself forward to announce the hour in a clear, insolent voice. Its apparition was every time a fresh delight to the

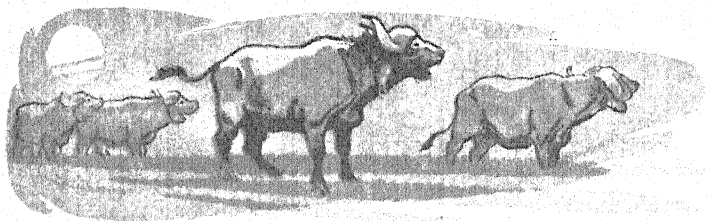


young people of the farm. From the position of the sun they judged accurately when the midday call was due, and by a quarter to 12 I could see them approaching the house from all sides, at the tail of their goats, which it was their duty to attend. The heads of the children and of the goats swam through the bush and long grass of the forest like heads of frogs in a pond.

They left their flocks on the lawn and came in noiselessly on their bare feet; the bigger ones were about ten years and the youngest two years. They behaved very well and kept up a sort of self-made ceremonial for their visits, which came to this: that they could move about freely in the house as long as they did not touch anything, or sit down, or speak unless spoken to. As the cuckoo rushed out on them, a great movement of ecstasy and suppressed laughter ran through the group.

It also sometimes happened that a young herdboy, who did not feel any responsibility about the goats, would come back in the early morning all by himself, stand for a long time in front of the

clock, now shut up and silent, and address it in Kikuyu in a slow singsong declaration of love, then gravely walk out again.



KAMANTE was a small Kikuyu boy, the son of one of my squatters. He must have lived on the farm for some years before I ever met him; I suppose that he had been leading a seclusive existence, like a sick animal.

I came upon him for the first time one day when I was riding across the plain of the farm, and he was herding his people's goats there. He was the most pitiful object that you could set eyes on. His head was big and his body terribly small and thin, the elbows and knees stood out like knots on a stick and both his legs were covered with deep running sores from the thigh to the heel. In his flat, angular, harassed, and infinitely patient face, the eyes were without glance, dim like the eyes of a dead person. I told him to come round to my house the next morning, so that I could try to cure him.

I was a doctor to the people on the farm most mornings from nine to ten, and like all great quacks I had a large circle of patients. They squatted on a paved terrace outside my house, the old skeletons of men with tearing coughs and running eyes, the young slim smooth brawlers with black eyes and bruised mouths, and the mothers with their feverish children, like little dry flowers, hanging upon their necks. I often had bad burns to treat, for the Kikuyu at night sleep round the fires in their huts, and the piles of burning wood or charcoal may collapse and slide down on them. The atmosphere of the terrace was animated, electric,

like that of the casinos in Europe. The low lively flow of talk would stop when I came out, but the silence was pregnant with possibilities, now the moment had come when anything might happen. They did, however, wait for me to choose my first patient.

I knew very little of doctoring, just what you learn at a first-aid course. But my renown as a doctor had been spread by a few chance lucky cures and had not been decreased by the catastrophic mistakes that I had made.

Kamante, to my surprise, turned up at my house the morning after our first meeting. He stood there, a little away from the other sick people present, erect, with his half-dead face, as if after all he had some feeling of attachment to life, and had now made up his mind to try this last chance of holding on to it.

He showed himself with time to be an excellent patient. He came when he was ordered to come, without fault, and he could keep account of time when he was told to come back every third or fourth day, which is an unusual thing with the natives. He bore the hard treatment of his sores with a stoicism that I have not known the like of. In all these respects I might have held him up as a model to the others, but I did not do so, for at the same time he caused me much uneasiness of mind.

Rarely, rarely have I met such a wild creature, a human being who was so utterly isolated from the world and, by a sort of firm deadly resignation, completely closed to all surrounding life. I could make him answer when I questioned him, but he never volunteered a word and never looked at me. He had no pity whatever in him, and kept a little scornful laughter of contempt, and of knowing better, for the tears of the other sick children when they were washed and bandaged. He had no wish for any sort of contact with the world round him; the contacts that he had known of had been too cruel for that. His fortitude of soul in the face of pain was the fortitude of an old warrior. A thing could never be so bad as to surprise him; he was, by his career and his philosophy, prepared for the worst.

As far as my doctoring of him went, things did not look hopeful. For a long time I kept on washing and bandaging his leg, but the disease was beyond me. From time to time he would grow a little better, and then the sores would break out in new places. In the end I made up my mind to take him to the hospital of the Scotch Mission.

This decision of mine for once was sufficiently fatal to make an impression on Kamante: he did not want to go. He was prevented by his career and his philosophy from protesting much against anything, but when I drove him to the Mission, and delivered him there in the long hospital building, in surroundings entirely foreign and mysterious to him, he trembled.

At the Scotch Mission they kept Kamante for three months. During that time I saw him once. I came riding past the Mission on my way to the Kikuyu railway station, and the road here for a while runs along the hospital grounds. I caught sight of Kamante in the grounds; he was standing by himself at a little distance from the groups of other convalescents. By this time he was already so much better that he could run. When he saw me, he came up to the fence and ran with me as long as it was following the road. He trotted along on his side of the fence, like a foal in a paddock when you pass it on horseback, and kept his eyes on my pony, but he did not say a word. At the corner of the hospital grounds he had to stop, and, as I rode on, I saw him standing stock-still, with his head up in the air, and staring after me, in the exact manner of a foal when you ride away from it. I waved my hand to him a couple of times; the first time he did not react at all. Then suddenly his arm went straight up like a pump spear, but he did not do it more than once.

KAMANTE came back to my house on the morning of Easter Sunday, and handed me a letter from the hospital people who declared that he was much better and that they thought him cured for good. He must have known something of its contents



for he watched my face attentively while I was reading it, but he did not want to discuss it; he had greater things in his mind. Kamante always carried himself with much collected or restrained dignity, but this time he shone with repressed triumph as well.

All natives have a strong sense for dramatic effects. Kamante had carefully tied old bandages round his legs all the way up to the knee, to arrange a surprise for me. It was clear that he saw the vital importance of the moment, not in his own good luck, but, unselfishly, in the pleasure that he was to give me. As slowly, slowly, he unwound the bandages from his knee to his heel there appeared, underneath them, a pair of whole smooth legs, only slightly marked by gray scars.

When Kamante had thoroughly, and in his calm grand manner, enjoyed my astonishment and pleasure, he again renewed the impression by stating that he was now a Christian. "I am like you," he said. He added that he thought that I might give him a rupee because Christ had risen on this same day.

He went away to call on his own people. His mother was a widow, and lived a long way away on the farm. From what I heard from her later I believe that he did upon this day make a digression from his habit and unloaded his heart to her of the impressions of strange people and ways that he had received at the hospital. But after his visit to his mother's hut, he came back to my house as if he took it for granted that now he belonged there. He was then in my service from this time till the time that I left the country—for about 12 years.

Kamante, when I first met him, looked as if he were six years old, but he had a brother who looked about eight, and both brothers agreed that Kamante was the elder of them, so I suppose he must have been set back in growth by his long illness; he was probably then nine years old. He grew up now, but he always gave the impression of being a dwarf, or in some way deformed, although you could not put your finger on the precise spot that made him look so. His angular face was rounded with

time; he walked and moved easily, and I myself did not think him bad-looking, but I may have looked upon him with something of a creator's eyes. His legs remained forever as thin as sticks. A fantastic figure he always was, half of fun and half of diabolism; with a very slight alteration, he might have sat and stared down, like a gargoyle on the top of the Cathedral of Notre Dame in Paris. He had in him something bright and live; in a painting he would have made a spot of unusually intense coloring; with this he gave a stroke of picturesqueness to my household. He was always what, in a white person, you would have called highly eccentric. Even when he did the same things as other people he would do them in a different way.

I had an evening school for the people of the farm, with a native schoolmaster to teach them. Kamante would come with me to the long old storehouse of corrugated iron in which the school was kept, but he would not join the children on the school benches. He would stand a little away from them, as if consciously closing his ears to the learning, and exulting in the simplicity of those who consented to be taken in. But in the privacy of my kitchen, I have seen him copying from memory, very slowly and preposterously, those same letters and figures that he had observed on the blackboard in the school.

Kamante was shrewd in money matters; he spent little, and did a number of wise deals with the other Kikuyu in goats. He married at an early age, and marriage in the Kikuyu world is an expensive undertaking. At the same time I have heard him philosophizing, soundly and originally, upon the worthlessness of money. He stood in a peculiar relation to existence on the whole; he mastered it, but he had no high opinion of it.

The white people often say of the Kikuyu that they know nothing of gratitude, but Kamante was not ungrateful. A number of times, many years after our first meeting, he went out of his way to do me a service for which I had not asked him, and when I questioned him why he had done it, he said that if it had not



been for me he should have been dead a long time ago. I believe that, from the beginning, he looked upon the trouble that I had taken to get him cured as upon a piece of hopeless eccentricity. But he showed me all the time great interest and sympathy, and he laid himself out to guide my great ignorance.

Kamante began in my house as a *dog-toto*. Later I sent him into the kitchen to be a cook's boy, a *marmiton*, under my old cook Esa, who was murdered. After Esa's death he became my chef.

In the kitchen, in the culinary world, Kamante had all the attributes of genius. If he had been born in Europe and had a clever teacher, he might have become famous, and would have cut a droll figure in history. His attitude to his art was that of a master.

Kamante, in all cooking matters, had a surprising manual adroitness. The great tricks and tours de force of the kitchen were child's play to his dark crooked hands; they knew on their own everything about omelets, *vol-au-vents*, sauces and mayonnaises.

He had a special gift for making things light, as in the legend the infant Christ forms birds out of clay and tells them to fly. He scorned all complicated tools, as if impatient of too much independence in them, and when I gave him a machine for beating eggs he set it aside to rust, and beat whites of egg with a weeding knife that I had had to weed the lawn with, and his whites of eggs towered up like light clouds.

He had a great memory for recipes. He could not read, so that cookery books were of no use to him, but he must have held all that he was ever taught stored up in his ungraceful head. He named the dishes after some event which had taken place on the day they had been shown to him, and he spoke of the sauce of the lightning that struck the tree, and of the sauce of the gray horse that died. But he did not confound any two of these things.

Kamante could have no idea as to how a dish of ours ought to taste. He did at times taste the food that he cooked, but then with a distrustful face, like a witch who takes a sip out of her caldron. He stuck to the maize-cobs of his fathers. He did, I feel, look upon the trouble that we give ourselves about our food as upon a lunacy. I sometimes tried to extract from him his views, but although he spoke with great frankness on many subjects, on others he was very close, so that we worked side by side in the kitchen, leaving one another's ideas on the importance of cooking alone.

The Prince of Wales did me the great honor to come and dine at the farm and to compliment me on a Cumberland sauce. This is the only time that I have seen Kamante listening with deep interest when I repeated the praise of his cooking to him, for natives have very great ideas of kings and like to talk about them. Many months after, he felt a longing to hear it once more and suddenly asked me, like a French reading book, "Did the son of the Sultan like the sauce of the pig? Did he eat it all?"

Kamante showed his good will toward me outside of the kitchen as well. He wanted to help me, in accordance with his own ideas of the advantages and dangers in life.

One night, after midnight, he suddenly walked into my bedroom with a hurricane lamp in his hand, silent, as if on duty. It must have been only a short time after he first came into my house, for he was very small; he stood by my bedside like a dark bat that had strayed into the room, with very big spreading ears, or like a small African will-o'-the-wisp, with his lamp in his hand. He spoke to me very solemnly; "*M-sabu*," he said, "I think you had better get up. I think that God is coming." I got up, and asked him why he thought so. He gravely led me into the dining room which looked west, toward the hills. From the door-windows I now saw a strange phenomenon. There was a big grass fire going on out in the hills, and the grass was burning all the way from the hilltop to the plain; seen from the house it was a nearly vertical line. It did look as if some gigantic figure was moving and coming toward us. I stood for some time looking at it, with Kamante by my side; then I began to explain the thing to him. I meant to quiet him, for I thought that he had been terribly frightened. But he clearly took his mission to have been fulfilled when he called me. "Well, yes," he said, "it may be so. But I thought that you had better get up in case it was God coming."

I USED to sit and write in the dining room, with papers spread all over the dinner table, for I had accounts and estimates of the farm to do, in between my stories. A drought was upon the land, things were going badly, and there were little desolate notes from my farm manager to answer. My houseboys asked me what I was doing; when I told them I was trying to write a book, they looked upon it as a last attempt to save the farm, and took an interest in it. Later they asked me how my book was proceeding. They would come in, and stand watching the progress of it, and in the paneled room their heads were so much the color of the panels that at night it looked as if they were white robes only, keeping me company with their backs to the wall.

Kamante sometimes stood by the wall for an hour in the eve-

ning; his eyes ran to and fro like dark drops under the eyelashes, as if he meant to learn enough about the typewriter to take it to pieces and put it together again.

One night as I looked up I met those profound attentive eyes and after a moment he spoke. "*M-sabu*," he said, "do you believe yourself that you can write a book?"

I answered that I did not know. To conceive of a conversation with Kamante one must imagine a long, pregnant pause before each phrase. All natives are masters in the art of the pause and thereby give perspective to a discussion.

Kamante now made such a long pause and then said, "I do not believe it."

I had nobody else to discuss my book with; I laid down my paper and asked him why not. I now found that he had been thinking the conversation over before, and prepared himself for it; he stood with *The Odyssey* itself behind his back, and here he laid it on the table.

"Look, *M-sabu*," he said, "this is a good book. It hangs together from the one end to the other. Even if you hold it up and shake it strongly, it does not come to pieces. The man who has written it is very clever. But what you write," he went on, both with scorn and with a sort of friendly compassion, "is some here and some there. When the people forget to close the door the wind blows it about, even down on the floor, and you are angry. It will not be a good book."

I explained to him that in Europe the people would be able to tie it all up together.

"Will your book then be as heavy as this?" Kamante asked, weighing *The Odyssey*.

When he saw that I hesitated, he handed it to me in order that I might judge for myself.

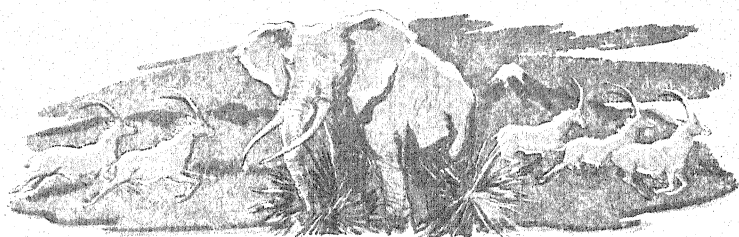
"No," I said, "it will not, but there are other books in the library, as you know, that are lighter."

"And as hard?" he asked.

I said it was expensive to make a book so hard.

He stood for some time in silence and then expressed his greater hopes of my book, and perhaps also repentance of his doubts, by picking up the scattered pages from the floor and laying them on the table.

A few days later, I heard Kamante explain to the other house-boys that in Europe the book which I was writing could be made to stick together, and that with terrible expense it could even be made as hard as *The Odyssey*, which was again displayed. He himself, however, did not believe that it could be made blue.



KAMANTE had a good hand with sick animals. He took out splinters from the dogs' feet, and once cured one of them when it had been bitten by a snake. Many times in the middle of the night, he and I, called by the howls of the dogs, have, by the light of a hurricane lamp, picked off them, one by one, the murderous big ants, the *Siafu*, which march alone and eat up everything on their way.

For some time I had in the house a stork with a broken wing. He was a decided character; he walked through the rooms and when he came into my bedroom he fought tremendous duels, as with the rapier, with swaggering and flapping of wings, with his image in my looking glass. He followed Kamante about between the houses, and it was impossible not to believe that he was deliberately imitating Kamante's stiff measured walk. Their legs were about the same thickness. The little native boys had an eye for caricature and shouted with joy when they saw the pair pass.

Kamante understood the joke, but he never paid much attention to what other people thought of him. He sent off the little boys to collect frogs for the stork in the bogs.

It was also Kamante who had charge of Lulu.

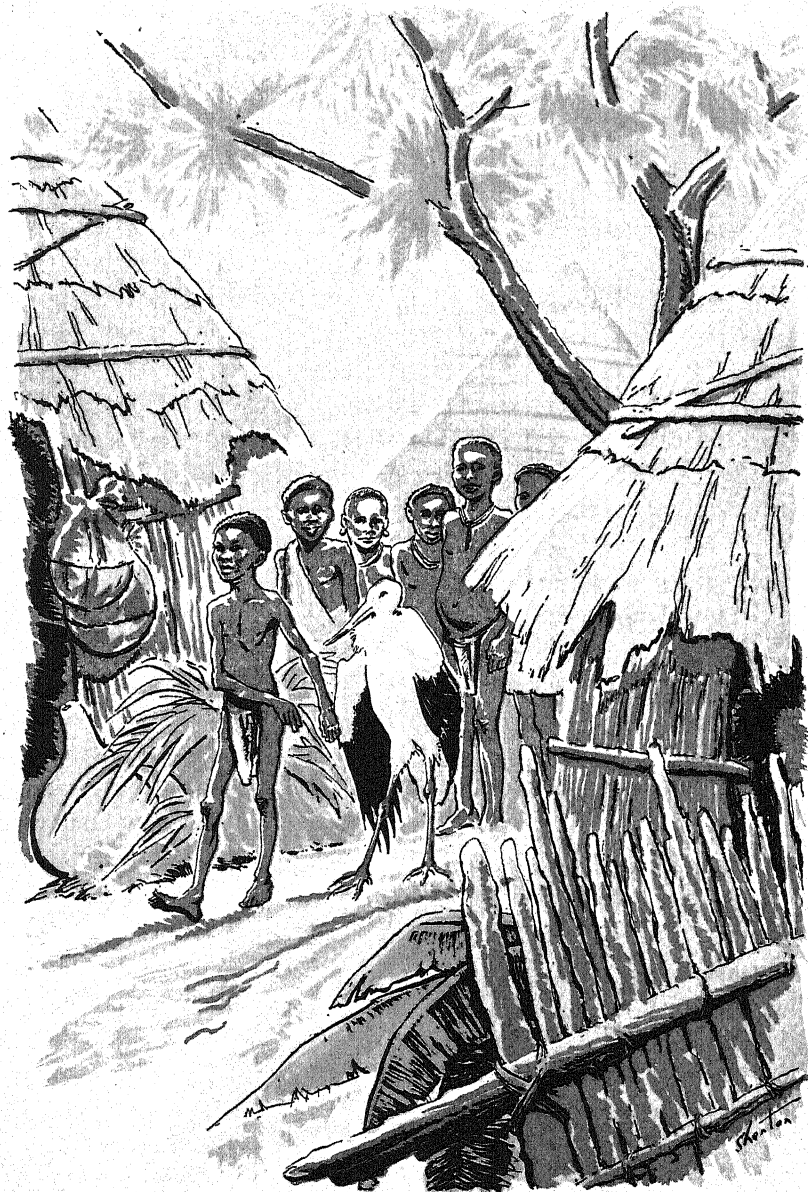
LULU came to my house from the woods as Kamante had come to it from the plains. She was a young antelope of the bushbuck tribe, which is perhaps the prettiest of all the African antelopes. They are a little bigger than the fallow deer; they live in the woods, or in the bush, and are shy and fugitive, so that they are not seen as often as the antelopes of the plains. But the Ngong Hills, and the surrounding country, were good places for bushbuck and, if you had your camp in the hills and were out hunting in the early morning or at sunset, you would see them come out of the bush into the glades, and as the rays of the sun fell upon them their coats shone red as copper. The male has a pair of delicately turned horns.

Lulu became a member of my household in this way:

I drove one morning from the farm to Nairobi. My mill on the farm had burned down a short time before, and I had had to drive into town many times to get the insurance settled; in this early morning I had my head filled with figures and estimates. As I came driving along the Ngong Road a little group of Kikuyu children shouted to me from the roadside, and I saw that they were holding a very small bushbuck up for me to see. I knew that they must have found the fawn in the bush, and that now they wanted to sell it to me, but I was late for an appointment in Nairobi, and I had no thought for this sort of thing; so I drove on.

When I was coming back in the evening and was driving past the same place, there was again a great shout from the side of the road and the small party was still there, a little tired and disappointed, for they may have tried to sell the fawn to other people passing by in the course of the day. They held up the fawn high to tempt me. But I had had a long day in town and some ad-





versity about the insurance, so that I did not care to stop or talk, and I just drove on past them. I did not even think of them when I was back in my house, and dined and went to bed.

The moment that I had fallen asleep I was awakened again by a great feeling of terror. The picture of the boys and the small buck, which had now collected and taken shape, stood out before me, clearly, as if it had been painted, and I sat up in bed as appalled as if someone had been trying to choke me. What, I thought, would become of the fawn in the hands of the captors who had stood with it in the heat of the long day, and had held it up by its joined legs? It was surely too young to eat on its own. I myself had driven past it twice on the same day, like the priest and the Levite in one, and had given no thought to it, and now, at this moment, where was it? I got up in a real panic and woke up all my houseboys. I told them that the fawn must be found and brought me in the morning, or they would all of them get their dismissal from my service. They were immediately up to the idea. Two of my boys had been in the car with me the same day, and had not shown the slightest interest in the children or the fawn; now they came forward and gave the others a long list of details of the place and the hour and of the family of the boys. It was a moonlight night; my people all took off and spread in the landscape in a lively discussion of the situation; I heard them expatiating on the fact that they were all to be dismissed in case the bushbuck was not found.

Early next morning when Farah brought me in my tea, Juma came in with him and carried the fawn in his arms. It was a female, and we named her Lulu, which I was told was the Swahili word for pearl.

Lulu by that time was only as big as a cat, with large quiet purple eyes. She had such delicate legs that you feared they would not bear being folded up and unfolded again, as she lay down and rose up. Her ears were smooth as silk and exceedingly expressive. Her nose was black as a truffle. Her diminutive hoofs gave her all

the air of a young Chinese lady of the old school, with laced feet. It was a rare experience to hold such a perfect thing in your hands.

Lulu soon adapted herself to the house and its inhabitants and behaved as if she were at home. During the first weeks the polished floors in the rooms were a problem in her life, and when she got off the carpets her legs went away from her to all four sides; it looked catastrophic but she did not let it worry her much and in the end she learned to walk on the bare floors with a sound like a succession of little angry finger taps. She was extraordinarily neat in all her habits. She was headstrong already as a child, but when I stopped her from doing the things she wanted to do, she behaved as if she said: Anything rather than a scene.

Kamante brought her up on a sucking bottle, and he also shut her up at night, for we had to be careful of her as the leopards were up round the house after nightfall. She held to him and followed him about. From time to time when he did not do what she wanted, she gave his thin legs a hard butt with her young head, and she was so pretty that you could not help, when you looked upon the two together, seeing them as a new paradoxical illustration to the tale of the Beauty and the Beast. On the strength of this great beauty and gracefulness, Lulu obtained for herself a commanding position in the house and was treated with respect by all.

In Africa I never had dogs of any other breed than the Scotch deerhound. There is no more noble or gracious kind of dog. They must have lived for many centuries with men, to understand and fall in with our life and its conditions the way they do. You will also find them in old paintings and tapestries, and they have in themselves a tendency to change, by their looks and manners, their surroundings into tapestry; they bring with them a feudal atmosphere.

My two deerhounds understood Lulu's power and position in the house. The arrogance of the great hunters was like water with her. She pushed them away from the milk bowl and from their

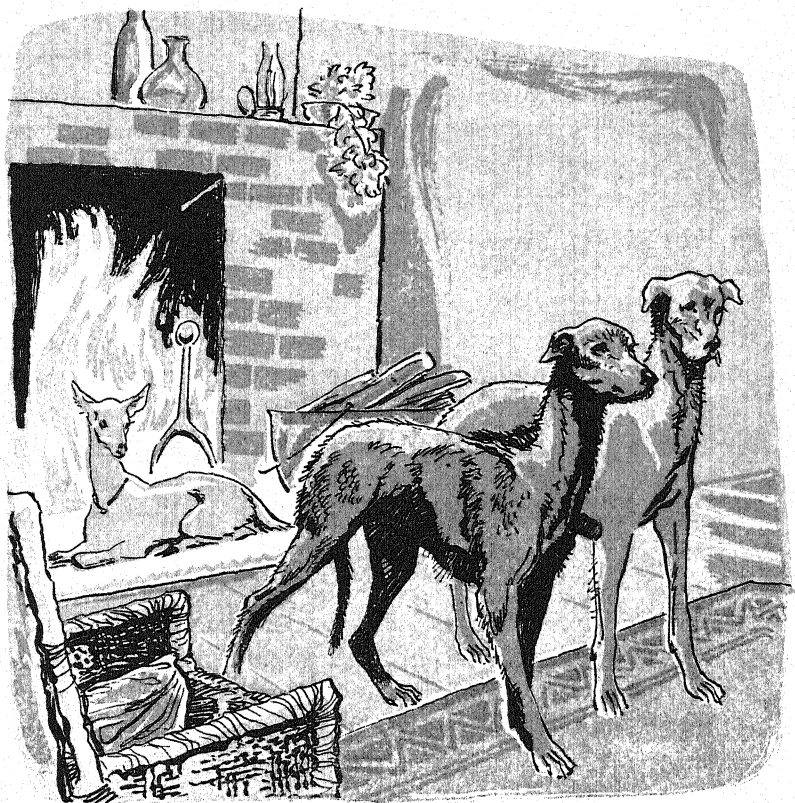
favorite places in front of the fire. I had tied a small bell on a rein round Lulu's neck, and there came a time when the dogs, when they heard the jingle of it approaching through the rooms, would get up resignedly from their warm beds by the fireplace, and go and lie down in some other part of the room. Still nobody could be of a gentler demeanor than Lulu was when she came and lay down, in the manner of a perfect lady who demurely gathers her skirts about her and will be in no one's way. She drank the milk with a polite, pernickety mien, as if she had been pressed by an overkind hostess. She insisted on being scratched behind the ears, in a pretty forbearing way, like a young wife who pertly permits her husband a caress.

When Lulu grew up and stood in the flower of her young loveliness she was a slim delicately rounded doe, from her nose to her toes unbelievably beautiful. She looked like a minutely painted illustration to Heine's song of the wise and gentle gazelles by the flow of the river Ganges.

But Lulu was not really gentle; she had the so-called devil in her. She had, to the highest degree, the feminine trait of appearing to be exclusively on the defensive, concentrated on guarding the integrity of her being, when she was really, with every force in her, bent upon the offensive. Against whom? Against the whole world. Her moods grew beyond control or computation, and she would go for my horse, if he displeased her. I remembered old Hagenbeck, the circus director, in Hamburg, who said that of all animal races, the Carnivora included, the deer are least to be relied on, and that you may trust a leopard, but if you trust a young stag, sooner or later he falls upon you in the rear.

Lulu was the pride of the house even when she behaved like a real shameless young coquette; but we did not make her happy. Sometimes she walked away from the house for hours, or for a whole afternoon.

One evening Lulu did not come home and we looked out for her in vain for a week. This was a hard blow to us all. A clear



note had gone out of the house and it seemed no better than other houses. I thought of the leopards by the river and one evening I talked about them to Kamante.

As usual he waited some time before he answered, to digest my lack of insight. It was not till a few days later that he approached me upon the matter. "You believe that Lulu is dead, *M-sabu*," he said.

I did not like to say so straight out, but I told him I was wondering why she did not come back.

"Lulu," said Kamante, "is not dead. But she is married."

This was surprising news; I asked him how he knew.

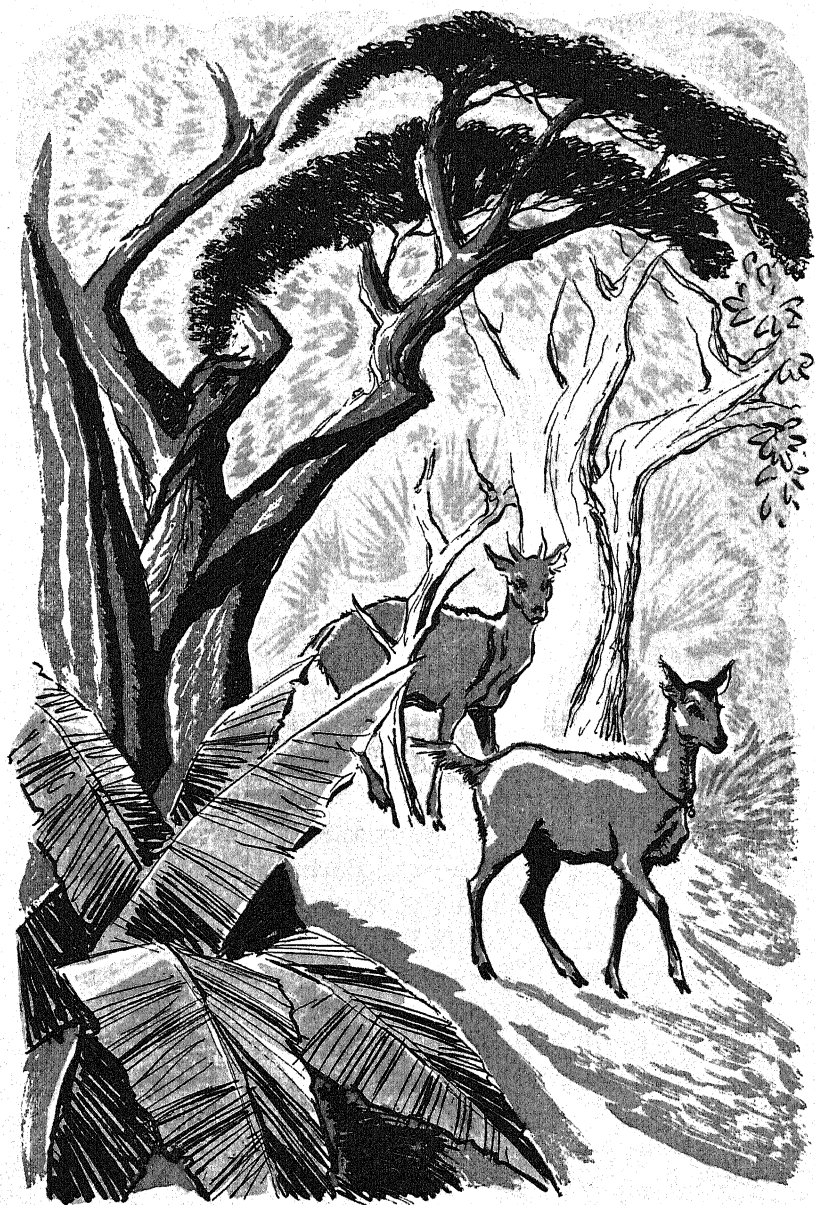
"Oh, yes," he said, "she is married. She lives in the forest with her *bwana*," — her husband, or master. "But she has not forgotten the people; most mornings she is coming back to the house. I lay out crushed maize for her at the back of the kitchen; then just before the sun comes up, she walks round there from the woods and eats it. Her husband is with her, but he is afraid of the people because he has never known them. He stands below the big white tree by the other side of the lawn. But up to the houses he dare not come."

I told Kamante to come and fetch me when he next saw Lulu. A few days later before sunrise he came and called me out.

It was a lovely morning. The last stars withdrew while we were waiting; the sky was clear and serene but the world in which we walked was somber still, and profoundly silent. The grass was wet; down by the trees where the ground sloped it gleamed with the dew like dim silver.

A bird began to sing, and then I heard, a little way off in the forest, the tinkling of a bell. Yes, it was a joy; Lulu was back and about in her old places! It came nearer; I could follow her movements by its rhythm; she was walking, stopping, walking on again. A turning round one of the boys' huts brought her upon us. It suddenly became an unusual and amusing thing to see a bushbuck so close to the house. She stood immovable now; she seemed to be prepared for the sight of Kamante, but not for that of me. But she did not make off; she looked at me without fear and without any remembrance of our skirmishes of the past or of her own ingratitude in running away without warning.

Lulu of the woods was a superior, independent being; a change of heart had come upon her: she was in possession. If I had happened to have known a young princess in exile and while she was still a pretender to the throne, and had met her again in her full queenly estate after she had come into her rights, our meeting would have had the same character. She was now the complete Lulu. The spirit of offensive had gone from her; for whom, and



why, should she attack? She was standing quietly on her divine rights. She remembered me enough to feel that I was nothing to be afraid of. For a minute she gazed at me; her purple smoky eyes were absolutely without expression and did not wink, and I remembered that the gods or goddesses never wink and felt that I was face to face with the ox-eyed Hera. She lightly nipped a leaf of grass as she passed me, made one pretty little leap, and walked on to the back of the kitchen where Kamante had spread maize on the ground.

Kamante touched my arm and then pointed toward the woods. As I followed the direction, I saw, under a tall Cape chestnut tree, a male bushbuck, a small tawny silhouette at the outskirts of the forest, with a fine pair of horns, immovable like a tree stem. Kamante observed him for some time, and then laughed.

"Look here now," he said. "Lulu has explained to her husband that there is nothing up by the houses to be afraid of, but all the same he dares not come. Every morning he thinks that today he will come all the way but, when he sees the house and the people, he gets a cold stone in the stomach,"—this is a common thing in the native world, and often gets in the way of the work on the farm—"and then he stops by the tree."

For a long time Lulu came to the house in the early mornings. Her clear bell announced that the sun was up on the hills; I used to lie in bed and wait for it. Sometimes she stayed away for a week or two, and we missed her and began to talk of the people who went to shoot in the hills. But then again my houseboys announced: "Lulu is here," as if it had been the married daughter of the house on a visit. A few times more I also saw the bushbuck among the trees, but Kamante had been right, and he never collected enough courage to come all the way to the house.

One day, as I came back from Nairobi, Kamante was keeping watch for me outside the kitchen door, and stepped forward, much excited, to tell me that Lulu had been to the farm the same day and had had her toto—her baby—with her. Some days after,



I had the honor to meet her among the boys' huts, much on the alert and not to be trifled with, a very small fawn at her heels, as delicately tardive in his movements as Lulu herself had been when we first knew her. This was just after the long rains and, during those summer months, Lulu was to be found near the houses, in the afternoon as well as at daybreak. She would even be round there at midday, keeping in the shadow of the huts.

Lulu's fawn was not afraid of the dogs, and would let them sniff him all over; but he could not get used to the natives or to me, and if we ever tried to get hold of him, the mother and the child were off.

Lulu herself would never, after her first long absence from the house, come so near to any of us that we could touch her. In other ways she was friendly; she understood that we wanted to look at her fawn, and she would take a piece of sugar cane from an outstretched hand. She walked up to the open dining-room door, and gazed thoughtfully into the twilight of the rooms, but she never again crossed the threshold. She had by this time lost her bell, and came and went away in silence.

My houseboys suggested that I should let them catch Lulu's fawn, and keep him as we had once kept Lulu. But I thought it would make a boorish return to Lulu's elegant confidence in us.

It also seemed to me that the free union between my house and the antelope was a rare, honorable thing. Lulu came in from the wild world to show that we were on good terms with it, and she made my house one with the African landscape, so that nobody could tell where the one stopped and the other began.

The league between Lulu and her family and my house lasted for many years. The bushbucks were often in the neighborhood of the house; they came out of the woods and went back again as if my grounds were a province of the wild country. They came mostly just before sunset, and first moved in among the trees like delicate dark silhouettes on the dark green, but when they stepped out to graze on the lawn in the light of the afternoon sun their

coats shone like copper. One of them was Lulu, for she came up near to the house and walked about sedately, pricking up her ears when a car arrived, or when we opened a window; and the dogs would know her.

The years in which Lulu and her people came round to my house were the happiest of my life in Africa. For that reason, I came to look upon my acquaintance with the forest antelopes as upon a great boon and a token of friendship from Africa. All the country was in it, good omens, old covenants, a song:

"Make haste, my beloved, and be thou like to a roe  
or to a young hart upon the mountains of spices."

During my last years in Africa I saw less and less of Lulu and her family. Within the year before I went away I do not think that they ever came. But often, even now, in the quiet hours at daybreak, I have dreamed that I have heard Lulu's clear bell, and in my sleep my heart has run full of joy; I have awakened expecting something very strange and sweet to happen, just now, in a moment.

I HAVE NOT heard of Lulu, since I went away, but from Kamante I have heard, and from my other houseboys in Africa. It is not more than a month since I had the last letter from him. But these communications from Africa come to me in a strange, unreal way and are more like shadows, or mirages, than like news of a reality.

For Kamante cannot write, and he does not know English. When he, or my other people, take it into their heads to send me their tidings, they go to one of the professional Indian or native letter writers who are sitting with their writing desk, paper, pen and ink, outside the post offices, and explain to them what shall be in the letter. The professional writers do not know much English, either, and can hardly be said to know how to write, but they themselves believe that they can. To show off their skill they

enrich the letters with a number of flourishes, which makes them difficult to decipher. They have also a habit of writing the letters in three or four different kinds of ink and, whatever their motive for this is, it gives the impression that they are squeezing the last drop out of a number of ink bottles. From all these efforts come the sort of messages that people got from the Oracle of Delphi. There is a depth in the letters; you feel that there is some vital communication which has been heavy on the heart of the sender, which had made him walk in a long way from the Kikuyu Reserve to the post office. But it is wrapped up in darkness. The cheap and dirty little sheet of paper that, when it comes to you, has traveled many thousand miles, seems to speak and speak, even to scream to you, but it tells you nothing at all.

Kamante, however, in this as in most other ways was different from other people. As a correspondent he has a manner of his own. He puts three or four letters into the same envelope, and has them marked: *1st Letter*, *2nd Letter*, and so on. They all contain the same things, repeated over and over. Perhaps he wants to make a deeper impression upon me by repetition; he had that way in talking when there was anything that he particularly wanted me to understand or remember. Perhaps it is difficult for him to break off when he feels that he has got into contact with a friend at such a great distance.

Kamante writes that he has been out of work for a long time. I was not surprised to hear of it, for he was really caviar to the general. I had educated a royal cook and left him without a patron. Where the great chef walked in deep thought, full of knowledge, nobody sees anything but a little bandy-legged Kikuyu, a dwarf with a flat, still face.

What has Kamante got to say when he walks in to Nairobi, takes up his stand before the greedy supercilious Indian letter writer, and expounds to him a message that is to go round half the world? The lines are crooked and there is no order in the phrases. But Kamante had in him a greatness of soul of which the

people who knew him will still hear the note in the cracked disordered music, even as an echo of the harp of the herdboy David.

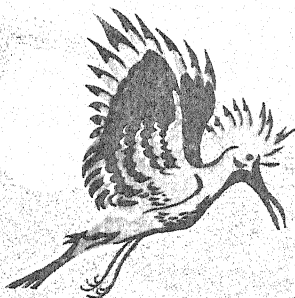
This is a "*2nd Letter*":

"I was not forget you Memsahib. Honoured Memsahib. Now all your servants they never glad because you was from the country. If we was bird we fly and see you. Then we turn. Then your old farm it was good place for cow small calf black people. Now they had no anything cows goat sheep they has no anything. Now all bad people they enjoy in their heart because your old servant they come poor people now. Now God know in his heart all this to help sometime your servant."

And in a "*3rd Letter*" Kamante gives an example of the way in which the native can say a handsome thing to you; he writes:

"Write and tell us if you turn. We think you turn. Because why? We think that you shall never can forget us. Because why? We think that you remembered still all our face and our mother names."

A white man who wanted to say a pretty thing to you would write: "I can never forget you." The African says: "We do not think of you, that you can ever forget us."



*Isak Dinesen*



ISAK DINESEN is the maiden name and also the pen name of Baroness Karen Blixen, who comes of an old Danish country family. After spending her childhood near the sea, and later studying painting in Copenhagen, Paris and Rome, she married a cousin of the King of Denmark and set out for Kenya to run the coffee plantation described in *Out of Africa*. There, during rainy seasons when work was slack, she began to write. She was forced to give up the farm when coffee prices fell in 1931, but she looks back on her 17 years in Africa as the high point in her life — “near to an ideal existence.”

Her first book, *Seven Gothic Tales*, appeared in 1934, followed by *Out of Africa* in 1938, and *Winter Tales* in 1942. As popular with the critics as with the general public, these three books have earned the retiring Danish authoress an enviable international reputation.

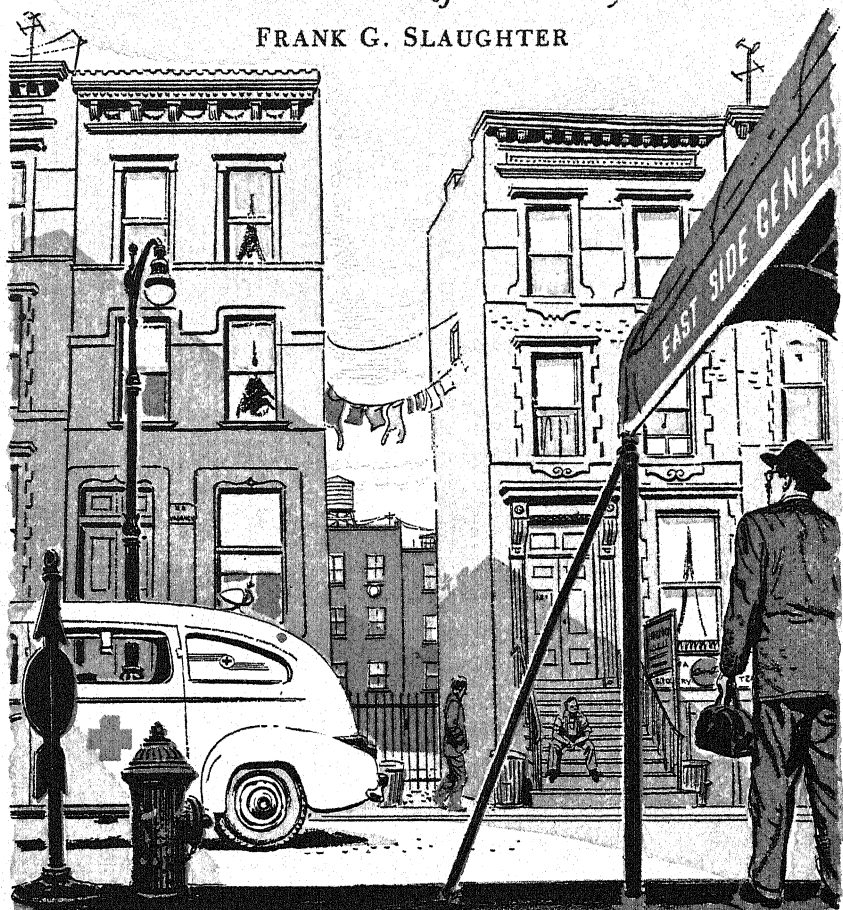
She now lives near Elsinore, Denmark, in her family's ancient house.

*Illustrations by Ed Vebell*  
*Decorations by James Alexander*

# EAST SIDE GENERAL

*A condensation of the book by*

FRANK G. SLAUGHTER



*"East Side General," copyright 1952 by Frank G. Slaughter, is published at \$3.50 by Doubleday & Co., Inc., 575 Madison Ave., New York 22, N. Y.*

THE normal tension of a big city hospital is supercharged at East Side General during the 24 hours covered by this story, when disaster threatens from the outside. For the small group of doctors and nurses who know the sinister nature of the threat, and for the patients who only sense the miasma of danger, the hospital is a proving ground, a citadel under attack. For the brilliant young surgeon, Dr. Andy Gray, and Nurse Julia Talbot, there is a tormenting choice to be made—a choice which will determine the whole course of their lives.

Frank G. Slaughter, a distinguished surgeon himself, has brought to this book, as to his many previous best-selling novels, his intimate knowledge of men and women in white, and his storyteller's art. The result is a rare combination of authentic background and high excitement.



"Thy Eternal Providence has appointed me to watch over the life and health of Thy creatures. May the love for my art actuate me at all times; may neither avarice, nor miserliness, nor the thirst for glory, nor for a great reputation engage my mind; for the enemies of Truth and Philanthropy could easily deceive me and make me forgetful of my lofty aim of doing good to Thy children.

"May I never see in the patient anything but a fellow creature in pain.

"Grant me strength, time, and opportunity always to correct what I have acquired, always to extend its domain; for knowledge is immense and the spirit of man can extend infinitely to enrich itself daily with new requirements. Today he can discover his errors of yesterday and tomorrow he may obtain a new light on what he thinks himself sure of today.

"O God, Thou hast appointed me to watch over the life and death of Thy creatures; here I am ready for my vocation."

— From the Oath and Prayer of Maimonides,  
a Jewish Physician of the 12th Century

## Evening

### CHAPTER 1



HE ambulance cut through the First Avenue traffic like a homing banshee—shaving taxi mudguards with only inches to spare, streaking past the looming menace of trailer trucks. Sirens were muted in New York these days, but the frantic ringing of its bell, and the legend—*East Side General Hospital*—painted on its cream-colored flanks proved that its errand was urgent. The orderlies, riding the back step with ease, stared down at motorist and traffic cop alike with aloof contempt.

Within the swaying tonneau, Dr. Anton Korff's asbestos suit and lead-lined gloves bore witness to the task he had performed on his two emergency victims. Tony wasted no further glance on those charred lumps of flesh. He had stripped them of their last rag as they lay on the warehouse platform. While the police cordon restrained the crowd, he had speedily transferred them to this ambulance. One cadaver, ticketed for pathology. One breather, ready for the table—if he survived his check in the emergency room. A busy intern could hardly be expected to speculate on what caused the plight of such jetsam. The thing, at the moment, was to win the race to the operating room.

Death had struck in a weird guise today. In all his years of war (and the evil that came before and after) Tony could hardly remember a more grotesque sight. Fortunately, he had been inured to shock from his youth. The carapace that shielded the real Tony Korff from the world had been adequate for a long time.

Yes, it was enough to keep the facts in order until he could relay them. Thereafter, he would be free to resume the more exciting business of planning for tomorrow. As always, his dreams leaped time and space, ignoring the crushing iniquities that plagued him. The ambulance snored out of traffic, to take the short cut between tenement stoops and the back wall of the Rilling brewery. The sharp aroma of hops came to Tony—pure as a chord of music, evocative of the past he could never quite forget.

For that moment, he was in Munich again. Back in the cellar of the Hofbrau, one with the legion that packed the huge beer hall, shouting the Horst Wessel from bursting lungs. One with the faith that gleamed in every eye. One with the fury that raised each heart from despond, fusing it into the same giant beat. . . . Of course, he had been only a boy in that distant day: he had learned long since to classify that madness under the microscope of science, to thank his stars that he had escaped it in time.

He was an American today, with the papers to prove it. Even his war record had been earned on the winning side. Yet America

had given him no dedication to match that early, fanatic faith.

The emergency case moaned faintly, and he bent forward to soothe the near-dying man with an ease born of long practice. He made the gesture mechanically, then stared out at the looming bulk of his hospital. Seen at this angle, East Side General was a mighty colossus. The great rectangles of Livingston and Warburg and Madison (each ward was sacred to the memory of its founder) shouldered each other for space in the glow of sunset. The spire of Schuyler Tower, the private wing, lifted a good ten stories above the buildings at the river's edge. Tony Korff scowled at the windows of the operating theater, high up in that immaculate cliff—and wondered if the resident was working there, at this late hour. He hoped that Dr. Gray would be free to take over what he had just found at that warehouse.

As the ambulance whined under its marquee and he shed his asbestos shell, Tony Korff found time to wonder why he should choose Andy Gray as the focal point for his hatred. Knowing the answer in advance (and insisting that hate refreshed the soul) he shoved the first stretcher into the hands that waited to receive it. He began his orders as he wheeled out the still-breathing victim—in a quick, clipped diction that had all but lost its foreign overtones.

"The Dead-on-Arrival goes to pathology. Call Dr. Easton, and please keep clear of this ambulance till he comes. I'm taking the breather to emergency myself. Put in a loudspeaker call for Dr. Gray. . . ."

From the corner of his eye, he saw the police squad car glide up to the platform. The system is meshing, he told himself, as he followed the stretcher into an elevator. Rocketing to the emergency operating room, he felt his pulse steady to a familiar rhythm. The hospital claims its own, he thought. To those who serve within its walls, it gives direction and meaning. Even to outcasts like Tony Korff.

For one brief moment, he felt a strange, all-but-human stirring

in his heart. He could almost pity Dr. Andy Gray for the ordeal he would soon be facing.

*"Dr. Gray. Dr. Andrew Gray."*

The operator's voice on the loudspeaker was soft and coaxing, as if begging for an instant answer. *"Dr. Gray, please. Dr. Andrew Gray."*

Already, the call had probed into the farthest reaches of East Side General, over the network of wires that knit the whole great hospital to its central switchboard. It had stabbed at the interns' quarters — where the nightly poker game was just beginning; at the wards — where a hundred nurses moved with muted precision; at the department of pathology where Dr. Dale Easton had just answered his own summons.

The summons found its target in the soda shop just off the main rotunda — just as Andy Gray was settling on a stool to order the sandwich that would pinch-hit for his evening meal.

"Dr. Gray here —"

"Dr. Korff calling —"

He waited for Tony to come on the wire — and jiggled the receiver while he waited. It was a habit that had become automatic in these crowding days of overwork. Four major operations since noon — and another on the table now, if he knew Tony.

"What's become of Korff, Operator?"

"He's on another wire now, Doctor. Dr. Easton's, I believe."

"Didn't he say what he wanted?"

"He's calling from the emergency O.R. Shall I ring another phone?"

"Thank you, no. I'll go up myself."

But he did not leave the booth at once. So Korff was in trouble. Then let Tony come to him direct, as protocol demanded. After all, he was the resident. Korff was still an intern, albeit a skillful one, with a background that all but matched his own.

He came out of the phone booth, permitting his eyes to linger

for an instant on his image in the fountain mirror. He bowed vaguely to the gaunt figure who stared back at him with uncomprehending eyes. Perhaps it's the life I've been leading, he thought. When have I had time to call the next quarter hour my own?

The worst of it was, he still loved operating—more than food or drink or love itself. Once a problem had claimed him, externals scarcely mattered. His eyes sought the mirrored image once again before he turned away from the soda fountain—and the pickup supper he'd have no time to order now. The surgeon's life, he repeated, is a short and not-too-merry one.

*"Dr. Gray. Dr. Andrew Gray—"*

He snatched the phone in the booth. This time Tony answered instantly.

"Can you come to emergency, Andy?"

"What's up?"

"A dilly I just brought in myself."

Why did he distrust Tony when the intern ventured into slang? Andy kept his voice mild. "What is it, Tony?"

"A burn case." Even on the phone, Tony seemed to lick his lips. "Two cases, in fact. One dead on arrival. We may save the other, if we move fast—"

"Can't you move fast without me? I'm off duty."

"I still feel this will interest you, Andy."

Dr. Andrew Gray curbed his impatience. This would not be the first time that Korff had teased him into a job that Korff himself was well able to finish.

"Did you bring Dale into this?" He frowned at the phone as he pictured the handsome blond intern with his changeless smile.

"Dr. Easton agrees. This is your job, not mine." There was no mistaking the provocation in Tony's voice. "I've called Dr. Ash, too, of course. We'll be ready for you in ten minutes—"

"Can't you be more definite?" If Tony had called the hospital head on his own, that meant Tony was sure of his ground. Dr. Martin Ash was not a man to disturb lightly.

"Sorry," said Tony. "My diagnosis is reserved, until Dale reports. As for the burns themselves — well, they are something you must see to believe."

"Who's scrubbing?"

"Talbot and Ryan, praise be."

Andy found that he had echoed Tony's sigh. The nurses just mentioned were graduates; indispensable in cases such as this.

"You'll assist, of course?" There was no rancor in Andy's voice now. No matter how they talked on the phone, he and Tony Korff were still a team.

"Of course, Andy. Dale will stand by — at his own request."

"I'll be right up."

"My report's on the scrub-room board," said Tony. "The O.R. will be ready when you're gowned."

*. . . Sgt. C. Donnelly, of Traffic B., whose squad car discovered the bodies, reported to emergency. Ambulance 17, with self in charge, took off at 6:43, arriving at destination four minutes later. . . . Area was roped off, and a Civil Defense unit on its way . . . The two victims, both burned so violently as to preclude identification, were tumbled on the platform of the shuttered warehouse of the Premier Box Company, long disused. . . . No sign of fire, no other visible marks of violence . . . Working with gloves, I removed all clothing and checked with Geiger counter to be positive the bodies themselves were not dangerous. . . . Ambulance returned to emergency at 7:01 with both victims — one D.O.A., the other near-moribund. Dr. Easton summoned to confirm findings: alerted Dr. Gray and set up for débridement. A.K.*

DR. Dale Easton, scrubbing side by side with Andy Gray at the long sink just off the operating theater, scowled at the report pinned on the scrub-room board. A long, thin man in his 30's, Dale acknowledged Andy's arrival with an off-center grin. He had waited patiently while Andy read through the intern's report.

When Andy spoke at last, Dale merely raised his shoulders a trifle, as though disclaiming an opinion in advance.

"If this is a radioactive job, why couldn't Tony say so on the phone?"

Dr. Easton grinned. "He got you to take over his case, didn't he? That's what counts."

Andy did not answer as he bent above the zinc-lined basin. Dale folded his own arms into a sterile towel and waited. His eye strayed to the operating room, where Dr. Tony Korff supervised the final details of their emergency. An outside observer would never guess that Andy, not Tony, was in charge.

Tony Korff's tragedy, thought Dale, was the tragedy of the small man everywhere who yearns hopelessly for greater things. Because his training matched Andy Gray's, Tony could still dream of besting the resident surgeon at the table — to say nothing of the battle for promotion that went on here without ceasing. He would never admit that his was the genius for background planning, rather than the bold initiative of the surgeon. In the present case Tony's organization had been more than efficient. Thanks to his handling of the ambulance pickups, a trail of radioactivity had been cut off well outside the hospital walls. Within the last half hour, he had sluiced down their patient, prepared him for surgery — and set up the operating room itself with an offhand ease that Dale had observed with envy. Martin Ash (or any other hospital head) would have cause to be proud of his senior intern tonight.

And yet, thought Dale, Tony had been wise to summon the resident for the operation itself. A touch-and-go battle to save a man's life was something for which the refugee had no relish. Particularly if it seemed doomed to failure. When the case was recorded, Tony would receive the credit for brilliant organization. Andy Gray might chalk up the loss of one more patient. . . . The pathologist turned from these unworthy suspicions as Andy spoke at last.

"Radioactive's a big word, Dale."

"A word that covers a great deal of sinning," the pathologist agreed. "I can recall a radium case we treated here before the war, when the A-bomb, as we think we know it, was only a fever-spot in some physicist's brain. Of course, *these* burns are far more profound, but —"

"But you're jumping to no conclusions as yet," said Andy.

"Not till I've run my tests."

"I remember that radium case," said Andy. "Or the headlines, at least. Wasn't it a bit of grand larceny that backfired?"

"This one could be just as simple," said Dale. "None of us knows how much of our stock pile — radioactive or otherwise — is being smuggled out of the country. Or what syndicate controls the traffic. Or how it punishes its Janizaries —"

"Would you call this a twin killing that didn't quite come off?"

Dale Easton grinned. "Shall we leave that to Inspector Hurlbut?"

"If Hurlbut is on his way here, it must be important. What about Ash? Isn't this one of his wife's party nights?"

Dale shrugged. "Apparently he meant to be late at this one. He was on his way to the hospital when we reached Mrs. Ash."

Andy twitched his fingers into pale-yellow gloves, and backed from the scrub room: the sterile nurse enveloped him in an operating gown with one practiced flip. The surgeon spoke quietly, his voice muffled in gauze.

"We'll proceed without Dr. Ash, gentlemen."

Tony had already come up briskly, his own voice muted. "The patient will be ready in a moment more, Dr. Gray. As you see, he's taking whole blood after the plasma. Dr. Easton authorized an injection of ACTH to minimize shock. . . ."

Dale Easton stepped back a bit, and surveyed the scene as a whole. The lights were dimmed down above the table though the anesthetist was already at work. In the penumbra, a probationer hovered, ready to press the electric button that would start the clock above the instrument case in the corner. In the anteroom,



glimpsed through the wide glass windows in the double doors a policeman dozed in an armchair — a bit of blue melodrama that would come alive when the patient was wheeled out after the operation.

The patient himself was remote from all this activity. A hump of flesh beneath a tented sheet, an effigy that already seemed resigned to the waxen pallor of death. . . . The flask of whole blood, tilted above the great vein at the ankle, was part of the strangely inhuman aura that surrounded the table. It was hard to believe that this was, indeed, a man who had once swaggered in the sun and cursed his betters.

In another room across the tiled floor, the two scrub nurses were still preparing for their task — in that easy hospital rhythm that seemed so unhurried, yet never wasted a motion. Julia Talbot began to soak her forearms in the basin the two nurses shared.

To the handsome girl beside her she said, "Did Tony tell you what's up?"

"Only that it's a general *débridement*." Vicki tossed a careless glance at the table, where the three doctors were in conference with the anesthetist. "I'm surprised that Andy is doing the cutting. Tony can handle burns: they've been his specialty ever since his Army hitch in Japan."

Julia was silent for a moment, then said: "Tell me, Vicki, why do you dislike Dr. Gray?"

Vicki Ryan shrugged. "I don't dislike him. It's just that some men interest me, some don't. I'm quite content to leave Andy Gray to his career. Offhand, I'd advise you to do the same."

Julia sighed inwardly. Aloud she said, pertly enough, "Yesterday he smiled at me, after that four-hour trephine. Who knows what he'll do tomorrow?"

"I tell you he's married to his work," said Vicki. "That kind is hopeless. And speaking of work, they're flagging us now."

Robed and gowned, the two scrub nurses approached the table. Perhaps I should take Vicki's advice, Julia thought. Certainly it's

ridiculous to fasten all my longings on one man — especially when he seldom realizes my existence. Perhaps he'd notice me oftener, if he heard that other men were interested. . . . She banished the thought as her eyes met Andy's across the table. He needs me here tonight, she told herself firmly. It's enough for now. Instinct told her that he was concerned tonight — not only with the job at hand, the welfare of the patient, but with something she could not name.

When Andy spoke, his voice was quite contained. "Bad burns tonight, girls. We'll want to cut some thin grafts. If this fellow lives, it will be immediate grafting and adrenocortico that saves him."

"Plus the fact we have the first team tonight," said Tony Korff.

"I'm always grateful for the first team," Andy Gray said. "They should know that by now." Julia could feel him draw farther away with each word — into the surgeon's citadel, where no man or woman dared to follow.

He threw an inquiring glance at the anesthetist, still intent on the needle taped to the patient's vein. "May we have him now?"

"I think he'll stand up, Doctor, if you make it fast."

"What's his condition?"

"Surprisingly good, since Dr. Easton made his last ACTH injection. There was no discernible blood pressure then: in fact, I was positive you'd lost him. The count's above 80 now, and still rising."

"I shot some cortisone in there, too," said Dale Easton. "His adrenals might be too knocked out to produce it right away."

Julia found that she was nodding in solemn agreement with the gauze-masked faces above the table. She knew (as well as Andy himself) that most of the miracle quality of ACTH was due to its stimulation of the adrenals, those small glands lying above the kidneys. The powerful substance they produced, cortisone, was the real controlling hormone of the whole human system — particularly in shock such as followed severe burns.

Two years as a special had inured Julia to human wreckage in all its forms — or so she had reasoned until Andy twitched the sheet aside, and she found herself staring at the body on the table.

Tony had done his work well: the victim was ready for the surgeon. The real wonder was that he still breathed at all. . . . At first glance, the man seemed a mass of charred flesh from the waist up, the face burned beyond recognition, the chest and arms roweled by a fire that could scarcely belong to this earth. From chin to umbilicus, the body was crisscrossed with giant welts. Without knowing why, Julia felt that this tortured skin had not really been burned at all. It was rather as though the ultimate cold of space had licked it—the absolute zero where stars explode without sound and no life dwells.

"These can't be burns—" She had spoken without thought, violating protocol by offering an opinion when none was needed. Feeling Andy's eyes upon her, she colored to the roots of her hair as she took her place beside the instrument table.

"We'll call them that for now," he said mildly. "Scalpel, please."

Julia slapped the knife into his hand. With that motion, she felt the lights come alive on the table as the probationer threw the switch: a faint whir from the facing wall told her that the clock had been set in motion, timing their work to the last second. Across the table, at her place beside the sponge bank, Vicki Ryan gave her a final wink before she, too, slipped into the rhythm of the task they were sharing.

Expertly draped by Tony Korff, the wounded body yielded to the healing magic of the knife. Andy dissected the charred tissue away without wasting a stroke. Dale Easton voiced the prevailing thought from his observer's post, the first word to be spoken since the operation began.

"Even with ACTH and cortisone, I don't see how he can live."

Andy spoke quietly, out of his rocklike concentration. "Fortunately, we needn't make that decision. As long as he lives, we work on him. When he dies, he's your responsibility."

Working swiftly behind him, Tony and Vicki applied hot pads to the areas denuded of skin, controlling the small amount of bleeding. Already, the anesthetist had turned to his supply table

to replace the flask of whole blood. Absolute quiet settled on the room, as the work went on. A third flask replaced the second as the anesthetist checked the patient's blood pressure one more time and answered Andy's wordless question with a nod. When Julia raised her eyes to the clock at long last, she was shocked — as always — to note that the operation was over an hour old.

Most of the burned areas were now well denuded. Tony, working with a dermatome along the undamaged area of the back, had begun to shave away paper-thin sheets of fresh skin, which were laid precisely in place over the raw areas, almost before the surgeon's knife could move on. At a nod from Andy, Julia added her own hands to Vicki's, to bind down the pressure dressings that were beginning to give the victim's head and shoulders the appearance of an outsize mummy. . . . Certainly there was no better dressing for this type of burn than the victim's own skin. Plastered down under pressure, living cells from the grafted sheet would begin to cement it to the raw flesh beneath, stopping the loss of vital fluids that so often wept a life away. Perhaps he'll live after all, Julia thought: perhaps he'll even tell us what strange hell he's visited.

"We'll take the other side now," said Andy. "Fortunately, the damage there isn't nearly so profound."

Julia's muscles were aching as she returned to the instrument table, but she was only vaguely conscious of that bone-deep weariness. Vicki, she saw, was even busier — her deft hands in constant movement as she flicked dressings through warm saline solutions, twisted them expertly and passed them on to Tony. The whole left side of the patient was deep-swathed now. The hands of the clock showed that the better part of two hours was behind them: the strain of the long ordeal had begun to press down on them all.

Only Andy Gray seemed unmoved — an iron tower in the midst of the constant bustle, the soft-voiced orders. As always in such moments, he seemed to possess no nerves at all. Why, Julia wondered, as she passed a fresh clamp, must he be tense and irritable in

other moments, when the average mortal could afford the luxury of calm?

"Fair enough, Tony. He's all yours."

Julia pulled back with a little start as Andy's voice cut across her musings. The last dressing had been strapped home, the last clamp removed. The patient was a true mummy now. Not even the tip of his nose was visible in the crosshatched bandages: the very eyelids, packed deep in wet gauze, seemed to rise like hillocks in a flat plain of white. But the deep, snoring respiration was proof enough that their two hours of travail had not been wasted. Andy stepped out of the cone of light above the table and peeled off his gloves.

"Nice work, team," he said quietly. "I'll make no bets, but he may have a chance to walk again. Or to talk, at least. Bed him down, Tony, if you please. And make sure the infusions go on through the night. I'll be in Dr. Ash's office. He may want you, too, when you've finished. . . ."

It was over then, as quietly as it had begun. Julia stood motionless beside the instrument table as Andy turned toward the door—and pulled back to admit the orderlies with their wheeled stretcher. No one stirred in the room as the deep-snoring mummy was trundled into the lounge. The patrolman in the armchair, rumbling to his feet with a truncated snore of his own, trailed the stretcher into the corridor. Tony, stripping off his mask, yawned openly.

"I've nothing to add to my report, Doctor," he said. "Sure the Head will be needing me?"

"I'd stand by, just in case. The law will keep you company in the meantime."

Tony shrugged and trailed the stretcher into the hall. Andy waved Dale Easton through the door, started to follow—then turned back once again, to lay a quick hand on Julia's arm.

"Chin up, Miss Talbot," he said. "You can't be as tired as you look."

I won't blush, Julia told herself firmly. I won't let him see what it means to have him notice me as a fellow human. It took real effort, but she kept her voice as impersonal as his own.

"I'm not a bit tired, Doctor. In fact, I'll be on call tonight, if you need me."

"I'll always need you, Julia," he said. "That's one thing you can rely on." He was gone with the words — already stooped a little under his own fatigue.

Julia's chin lifted as she faced Vicki Ryan. "Well, dear? Is that the way to handle men?"

Vicki yawned. "You're learning," she said.

Julia found she could smile, even as she faced the postoperative litter that seemed to choke the whole room. She could remember how she had once shuddered at that welter of sponges and dressings, mingled, as usual, with empty ampules and red-stained blood flasks. It would need two hours' hard labor to prepare the room for its next emergency. For once, she felt an overwhelming urge to dodge this chore. She wanted to be alone on her cot at the nurses' home — to go over every syllable of Andy's brief farewell.

"Will Sloane let us off this time?"

"I'll have her wig if she doesn't," said Vicki. "She was a scrub herself once — even if it was 20 years ago. She knows what back-ache means." The tall nurse paused abruptly, as the supervisor herself stalked in from the corridor.

At 50, Emily Sloane was astringent as her name. No field commander could have fitted his uniform more perfectly than she; no authority in the hospital (from Martin Ash down) was more thoroughly respected — and feared. Like most good supervisors, Emily had come up from the ranks, without favors. There was something ageless about her now — something withdrawn, as though she had put life behind her long ago. As usual, she had kept clear of the operation until the doctors had departed. Now she was on hand to take charge of the aftermath.

"Talbot and Ryan, you can go off duty now." Her voice was low-

pitched, with the whiplash of authority in scrupulous control. "Which of you is on call?"

"I am, Miss Sloane." Julia spoke mechanically, ignoring the dig of Vicki's elbow. "I'll stay if you want me."

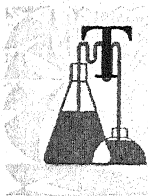
When Emily smiled, Julia thought of many things. Her stint as a probationer, when she had observed her first autopsy and fainted dead away, the consuming homesickness of that initial year of training — when she was too young to understand how subtly the hospital routine could replace one's need for outside affection — and too self-centered to understand that her chosen work could often transcend self.

Emily Sloane summed up those memories in her trim white person. At times, it was difficult to remember that the supervisor was human: it was rumored that she had no reality outside the starched perfection of her uniforms, and stored an extra thermometer where her heart should have been. Yet even her bitterest enemy could hardly deny that she was a symbol of the nurse at her finest.

"Like any good special," said Emily Sloane, "Ryan is warning you never to volunteer. Get back to your quarters, Talbot. You'll probably have enough work to satisfy you before morning."

Alone in the operating theater, Emily Sloane surveyed the hectic disorder and let out her breath in a contented sigh. She could have summoned any one of a dozen students to perform this task, merely by lifting a telephone; but it pleased her to do this particular job alone — with a dispatch that would have left those same probationers dizzy with admiration. Somehow, her mind was always freer while she worked. Now that she had her special domain to herself, she could even pretend that her sense of well-being was complete. There had been no real pain since morning — and, while she guessed the cause of that pain all too well, it was still easy to pretend that her fears were groundless. Tomorrow would be the time to face up to those fears, when the results of her test were in. Tonight, it was more than enough to roll one's sleeves and attack the disorder of the operating room.

## CHAPTER 2



HE private office of the hospital head, well-insulated by an anteroom and a double door that opened only to the pressure of a button beneath the doctor's desk, seemed empty of life as the clock in Schuyler Tower boomed the hour of ten; the figure that stood in the shadows by the window was part of the stillness. Dr. Martin Ash, moving away from the portieres, glanced resentfully down at the single typed sheet that contained Dr. Anton Korff's report of the strange accident he had brought to Emergency. Unseen by the group around the table, Martin Ash had stood at the window in the operating-room door while Andy Gray worked over the patient; viewed from that angle, the case had seemed merely the aftermath of the tooth-and-claw struggle that went on endlessly in any metropolitan underworld. Besides, Korff's penchant for dramatizing his accomplishments was well documented in the office files. . . .

Ash had driven downtown for a ritual visit to his office before the hour shift took over; the problem that his senior intern had dumped in his lap was still too brand-new to have reached his brain. Now, waiting for the arrival of Inspector Hurlbut, he forced himself to settle at his desk, while he wrestled with a deeper, more personal problem.

The quarterly report of the hospital's finances (with its ominous red-ink entries) awaited his inspection—and its eventual, half-apologetic referral to his wife, Catherine. Or rather, to Catherine's competent tax lawyers—who would grant the hospital's bookkeepers another lease on life.

Martin Ash stared for a long time at the photograph of the laughing girl, haloed in the glow of the desk lamp. Catherine was lovely when she married me, he thought. It's hardly fair that she should be even lovelier today.



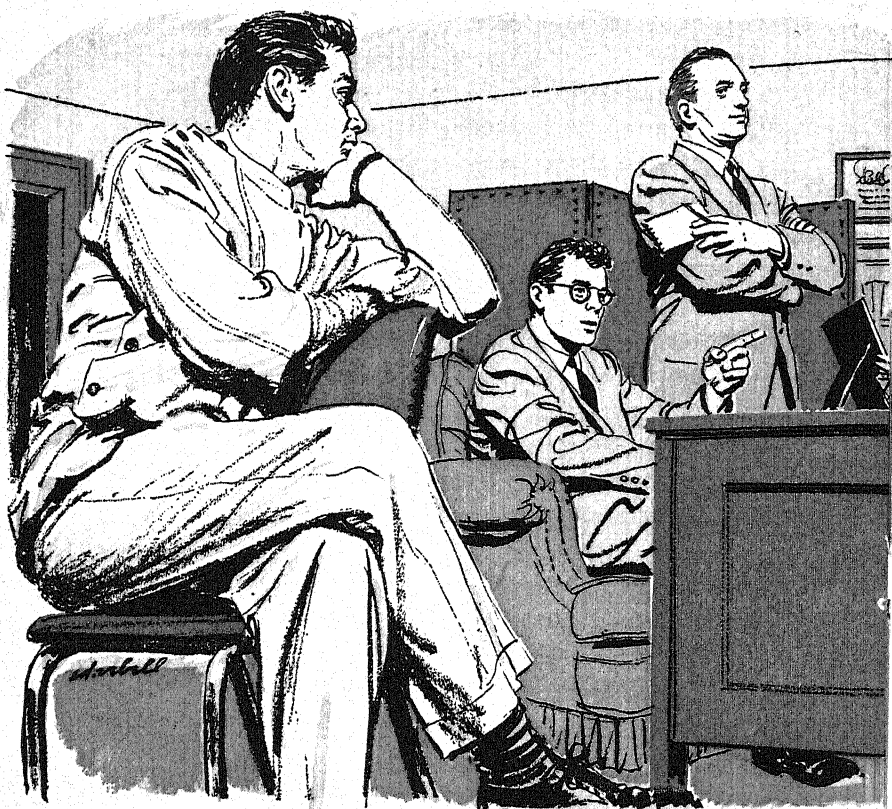
The head of East Side General teetered back in his overstuffed swivel chair and permitted himself the luxury of reflection. Put it down to chance that he had been interning here 20 years ago, after those long hard-scrabble years at a third-rate medical school. Put it down to chance that Catherine Parry had come to Schuyler Tower that very year to enjoy a nervous breakdown. Their first meeting had exploded a spark that had never died, even now when they were quarreling most bitterly. Looking back on it, he saw that it was her sublime assurance that had fascinated him. . . . The conviction that nothing could prevent her marriage to the brilliant (if unknown) Marty Aschoff, a product of the very slums that still sprawled at the gates of his hospital.

Life with Catherine had replaced his tenement pallor with a mahogany-brown Florida tan. It had been Catherine's millions that had sent him to the Mayo Clinic to burnish his surgeon's skill. It had been his wife, and her influence, that had made his climb up the medical ladder so rapid — and so preordained.

No one could say that either he or Catherine had sold the hospital a bill of goods. They might quarrel violently over ways and means, but they were united in their devotion to East Side General, their determination to make it a model of its kind. With no false modesty, he could insist that no hospital in New York boasted two better surgeons than Dr. Andrew Gray and Dr. Martin Ash. No hospital offered more consistent service to the community — the red-ink entries in its ledgers were proof of that.

Martin teetered still farther back in his swivel chair, and studied his wife's portrait. The pictured likeness of Catherine Ash continued to regard him with wide-open, trusting eyes. . . . It was almost a relief to hear the boom of Hurlbut's voice in the ante-room. Rising to welcome the Inspector and his doctors, he noted, with a certain relief, that only Andy and Dale were in the Inspector's wake — and a bulky familiar silhouette in tweed.

"Hello, Pete," said Martin Ash, agreeably enough. "I was wondering when you'd turn up."

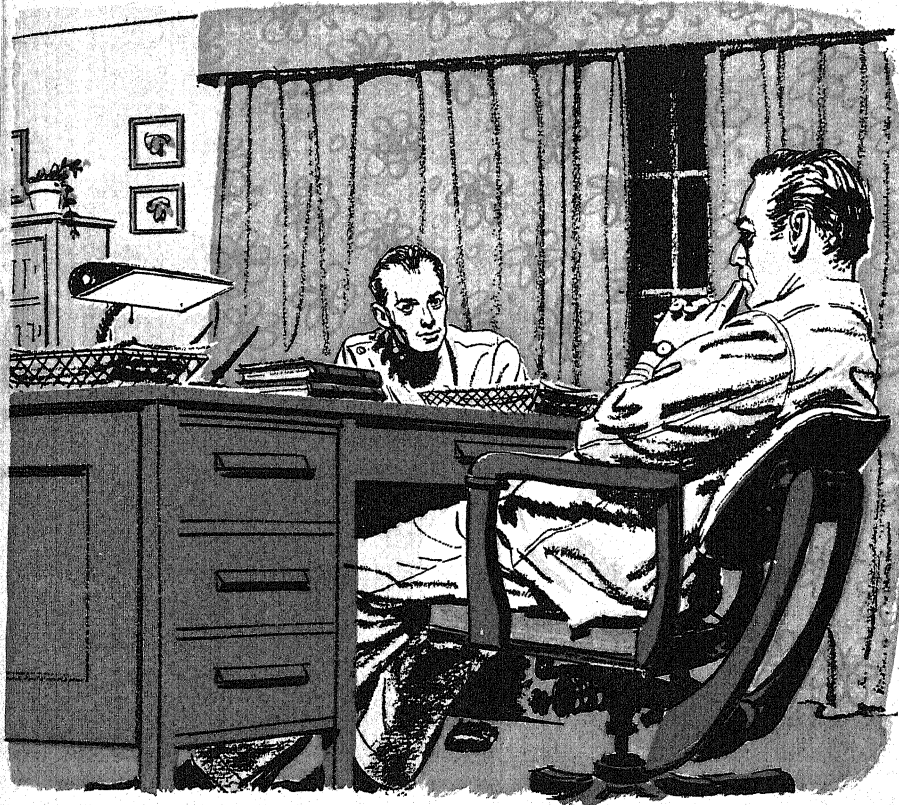


Pete Collins, reporter-at-large for the *Chronicle*, had covered East Side General for his paper ever since Ash could remember. Even now (when he had graduated to a by-line) Pete still dropped in daily, in search of the spark of human interest that could transmute bare fact to drama.

"Glad you don't mind, Doc," said Pete. "The Inspector does."

Ash asked Andy, "When did he join the tour?"

"From the beginning." Andy dropped his long-legged bulk in the most comfortable chair as he spoke; Dale Easton had already settled on the window seat. "Pete was having a beer with Dale, when the call came —"



Martin Ash spread his hands. "Say no more. I'd trust Pete in this as I'd trust myself, Inspector."

Hurlbut settled in the facing armchair. "How far is that, Dr. Ash?"

"Tell me what you know," said Martin. "We'll see how he reacts."

"Let me tell what *I* know, first," said Collins. "I doubt if the Inspector can top it at the moment. First off, Korff picks up his two dump cases on the warehouse platform. The Civil Defense squad comes into the picture—complete with Geiger counters and sluicers. Victims rushed to emergency—stripped down and, pre-

sumably, decontaminated. As of now, the D.O.A.'s on ice. The other one's upstairs, with a wire recorder and a cop—in case he decides to stop snoring and start talking. Which, at this writing, is a poor bet." Pete Collins spread a wad of copy paper flat on one knee. "Take over if you like, Inspector," he said. "I'm all ears."

Martin Ash did his best to smile on this war in the making. From his horn rims to his neat gray seersucker, Ash reflected, Hurlbut looked more like a discontented graduate student than a specialist in man's homicidal aberrations. Eying Collins sharply, the Inspector said, "Of course you heard they came from the U.S. atomic energy establishment at Brookhaven . . . ?"

"Since when would a couple of radioactive burn cases from Long Island turn up in a Manhattan warehouse?"

"Brookhaven's the word you're using in your story, Collins—and don't you forget it."

"Never mind my story for now, Inspector. I'm shooting for 'day after tomorrow, and the week after. Don't forget, the *Chronicle* has a man at Brookhaven, too. They've reported no accidents over there."

"Maybe we'll play it even closer," said Hurlbut. "Those might have been simple acid burns, you know—"

"You'll never sell that one to the wire services."

"Why? No one but you knows that the cases were radioactive."

"Correction, Inspector. That CD foreman was a talker. He'd laid the whole story on the line, before your boys could muzzle him—"

"On a thing of this kind we can muzzle the wire services," said Hurlbut quietly. "Just as we can muzzle you. Tomorrow, the *Chronicle* runs a straightaway item about two workers from Brookhaven, overcome en route to their jobs and picked up on this doorstep. We'll mention that one is still living, and keep our fingers crossed. Maybe it'll bring the right man out of hiding—if he hasn't already skedaddled."

"Give a little more," said the reporter. "Suppose you were steal-

ing for a profit. What'd you go after first? They say the Russians have plenty of uranium. What about heavy water?"

Hurlbut sighed. "Come out of your daze, Collins. Heavy water couldn't burn a man to death."

"What about one of those top-secret compounds they haven't even dared to name?"

"Washington is worrying that angle right now," said Hurlbut. "I'd keep my nose clear of it, if I were you."

"You're among friends, Inspector. Why not admit that all kinds of stuff has been leaking out of the country for months? Or are you assuming they've got the whole shebang in a box, right here on Manhattan Island?"

"Don't try to read my mind," said Hurlbut. "It isn't a healthy occupation."

"You know this hysteria about *bombing* New York is strictly for the comic books," said the reporter. "One of those boxes could be ticking right now, somewhere in the city. Any Oak Ridge alumnus could put one together in his spare time — if he had enough spare parts."

"Maybe you should be writing those comics, Collins."

Ash cut in quietly. "Even if that theory were true, it's something we hardly want to face, as of now. For the present let's keep our suspicions to ourselves, along with what news we have."

"The only real news we have now is that breather upstairs," Collins said. "And he may stop breathing any minute."

"We've a recorder at his bedside, Collins," said the Inspector. "You'll hear the first playback, if you'll take orders now."

Pete pulled down the corners of his mouth. "I'm on your team, Inspector. How often must I tell you?"

"Either he talks," said Hurlbut, "or he's a dead end. Unless we can name him from his dental work. From the outside, you can't be sure if he's a man or an orangutan —"

"Does a query go on the teletype, just the same?"

"The query is out now. Not that we expect much. And, of

course, we'll comb the district for witnesses. You can print that much, Collins—with the official statement about Brookhaven. And make sure you mention the one who's alive! That's most important — ”

“Pardon me if I sound dramatic,” said the reporter, “but shouldn't you give that flatfoot at the bedside some support—at least, till morning?”

“There's a cordon around the hospital now, if anyone's interested,” said Hurlbut. “That's something else you'll keep out of your story.” He got up and pulled his hat over one eyebrow. “I'll stop by in the morning, Dr. Ash, with what news I have.” The Inspector left the office with a curt nod for the two younger doctors. Collins, dropping his fold of copy paper in the wastebasket with an expressive shrug, followed the Inspector out.

Ash rocked for a while in his swivel chair after the reporter had gone. “Does Hurlbut know more than he's saying?” he wondered aloud, with the air of a man asking a question of no one in particular.

Dale Easton laughed. “Right now, sir, I'd say he knows less. What about you, Andy?”

“I'll answer that question with another,” said the surgeon. “How many D.O.A.'s have you autopsied without identification? How many has the medical examiner been able to name afterward?”

Ash nodded, out of his own memory book. He, too, had ridden enough ambulances to endorse the cruel logic of his resident surgeon's remark. The perfect crime, after all, was almost a commonplace in any slum. The destroyer who struck by night, and vanished without a trace, thrived in these sunless canyons. Weighing this truism, Ash could wonder at his opposition to Catherine's ambitious plans for East Side General—to say nothing of his own future. A situation like tonight's would be unthinkable, once they had moved the whole hospital uptown, far from the slums. Far uptown—where trees could spread their leaves in May and sunlight touched every window.

"I won't keep you, Andy," he said. "You should have gone off duty hours ago. And I'm sure you've a job in the morgue, Dale. Thanks again for not being alarmed. . . ."

But he sat for a long time after his assistants had quitted the office. Now, more than ever, he admitted he was powerless to work tonight. Certainly he had no logical reason to be afraid. Probably those burns were the result of some industrial accident, nothing more. Yet there was no denying the chill that clutched his heart.

DEEP in the hospital mass, where a corridor branched east to the surgical wards and west to the staircase that led downward to the morgue, Andy Gray and Dale Easton paused, as though reluctant to part company.

"Ash didn't seem in the least spooked," Dale said. "But, of course, it wouldn't show."

"Speak for yourself," said Andy.

"Personally, I'm buying the smuggling theory, along with Hurlbut. It's easier to sleep on than a time bomb."

Andy Gray kicked open a fire door, and stepped out to the cool of the evening—or what poor substitute an air shaft afforded. "I'm going to steal a minute for a cigarette," he said. "I haven't time to be afraid. Not with the life I'm leading these days."

Dale leaned in the open doorway. "You do work yourself too hard, Andy. But you can't help it. You love to operate—you're a born surgeon. And if you weren't a throwback, you'd be earning your \$50,000 a year uptown with the career boys."

"Surgery's my trade; I'll grant you I love it." Andy blew a smoke ring toward the Manhattan stars. "But I've kept up my *materia medica*, too. And I'll tell you something else, Dale. The moment my shoulders stop itching from that Army tunic, I'm heading for the sticks—and a general practice." Even in the half-light of the hospital fire escape, Andy's craggy profile seemed to soften with each word. "If you like, I'll take you with me. My guess is that you're a throwback, too."

"Don't tell me this tall timber is in Florida?"

"My home state — where else? I'm glad you remembered I'm a Florida Yankee." Hearing his voice go on, Andy Gray could feel the tension round his heart grow less with every syllable. "A town on the Gulf Coast you've never heard of. A turpentine-and-catfish town that's been self-contained since before the Civil War. My brother's the minister down there. We're going to build us a cinder-block clinic, with a church attached. He'll treat souls there and I'll treat bodies. But we'll be working together — that's the important thing. My kids are going to grow up there on the water with real people."

"And starve in the bargain?"

"No one starves in that corner of Florida. Nature sees to that."

The pathologist flipped his cigarette into the dark. "Is this dream on a full-time basis?"

"Far from it. I think this is the first time I've put it into words." Andy pulled the fire door open, and they entered the hospital once again, muting their voices from long habit. "Maybe I'll scuttle it day after tomorrow. I might even move uptown with the hospital, and join the Park Avenue Association."

"With or without Pat Reed?"

Andy scowled at his wrist watch. "So you've heard I had her backing — whenever I want it. I was wondering how fast that story had gotten round."

"Going to visit your beauteous patient now?"

"After I've made the rounds. As resident, I can hardly do less."

"And I must open up that burn case," said Dale. "Want to look in later?"

"I'll stop for a beer, if I'm not sidetracked."

Hurrying toward the surgical wards with his nervous, long-legged stride, Andy Gray fought down his rising discontent. Somehow, he had never intended to put his dream in words. A dedication to life above self, while it was applauded in the abstract, could never be explained in strictly practical terms to another



human—even to Dale. Wondering what Pat Reed would say if he asked her to share that kind of existence as his wife, he just escaped laughing outright.

I'll go next year, he promised himself, as he stepped under the drop light at the entrance to the men's surgery ward and picked up his first chart. Or the year after—even if I must go alone. In the meantime, who can deny that I'm needed here?

At first glance, the huge, high-domed room seemed an abode of the dead, so quiet were the sleepers in their long rows of cots. He moved down the line with the nurse on duty, pausing at each bed to check the charts, bending low to listen with a practiced ear to the soft-drawn breathing of a patient still too deep in post-operative anesthesia to know if he lived or died. The next bed, already screened away from the rest of the ward, told its own mute story. After a brief examination, Andy signed the death certificate on the nurse's clip board.

On his way to the private wing, Andy paused in a small room at the end of the corridor to check on his own special patient. The small boy who lay in the hospital bed seemed even smaller against that sterile desert of white: the bluish skin tone was pronounced, in the glow of the bed lamp. The nurse spoke softly at his elbow.

"We just discontinued oxygen, Doctor. He's resting comfortably now."

Andy moved automatically to the oxygen tent that still stood in the corner. "Keep it handy, in case. And call me if there's any change before morning."

But he did not leave the boy's bedside for a long moment. From birth, Jackie Simon had been what is known, in popular parlance, as a "blue baby"—and yet, like most infants with his particular affliction, he had somehow managed to survive. Now, at the age of six, he seemed too frail to be a tenant of earth. Andy continued to stare down at the bedside chart—the clinical picture was there, clear as a page from a surgeon's textbook. When Jackie had been only a bundle of cells in his mother's womb, something

had gone wrong with the cluster that eventually formed into heart and blood vessels. Jackie had come into this world with a defective septum—the partition that separates the right and left sides of the heart; in addition, the artery that led to the lungs from the right side of the heart had never fully opened. Blood, seeking vital oxygen had always been shunted to the left side and only a little entered the lungs at all. As a result, he had been left a heart cripple.

A child of the tenements, Jackie was unusual in other ways. His father was a musician of sorts, his mother a schoolteacher, invalidated before she could draw her pension. Even at this tender age, the boy had shown signs of talent in his father's field: when disaster struck, both parents had been saving what they could to launch a possible career. Neither had realized Jackie's true difficulty, until he had almost died of pneumonia that spring. Dr. Andy Gray, noting that telltale blue tint from the boy's first days on the wards, had made the diagnosis—and offered the only possible out. Thanks to the work of the pioneers at Johns Hopkins, Jackie's ailment could be cured by the knife—though it was an operation that few surgeons would risk, even now. Andy was risking it tomorrow, with the parents' consent.

It would be a ticklish job, of course—but that was the kind he loved. A gamble that was not a gamble, strictly speaking—for Jackie's life was already lost unless his heart could be restored to its normal function. Here, at least, the duel between life and death was clear-cut—with a reward worthy of the challenge.

He left the room with his calm restored. This was the part of his day he liked most—a panorama he could revel in alone, with no need to apologize for the emotion he felt as he looked upon his work and found it good. With no conscious sense of transition, he found himself stepping out of an elevator in the top floor of Schuyler Tower, that region of individual suites with penthouse exposure and pastels to beguile every convalescent. Not that pastels and Pat Reed had any real affinity—even if Pat had

had the slightest excuse for this prolonged stay on the outskirts of his domain. Knowing that his feet must carry him through her door eventually, he lingered a moment in the all-glass solarium, with its breath-taking view of the East River and the gray city slumbering beneath.

He looked down for a while at the few lights that still showed among the huddled tenement blocks to the north and west — and pulled back by instinct when he heard the sound of footsteps in the corridor. The white silhouette that slipped by on some errand was Julia Talbot. Even in the dark, he thought, there's no mistaking her purity — or her dedication. A stanza of poetry came into his mind unbidden, and he spoke it in a whisper to the unheeding gloom —

*She walks in beauty, like the night  
Of cloudless climes and starry skies;  
And all that's best of dark and bright  
Meet in her aspect and her eyes. . . .*

Ten-thirty sounded from the clock tower just above his head, a muted bell that seemed part of the hospital's own heartbeat. A scant hundred feet down the hall, Pat Reed would be awake and waiting — curled in her high hospital bed, confident that he would arrive before drowsiness claimed her. Confident, too, that she could force him to an avowal from which there was no retreating.

Had he clung to this escape to Florida as an antidote to Pat's long-term lure? Had he invested Julia Talbot with qualities she did not possess, to create an alternative to Pat Reed, and the Reed millions? His lips twisted in the smile that his friends knew too well — a grin that went deeper than cynicism, a wordless admission that man is frail and woman the vessel of that frailty. . . .

His feet had already taken him down the corridor — past the respectful smile of the floor nurse, up to the heavy brass knob of Pat Reed's door. His eye dropped mechanically to the leather

sleeve that kept the door from closing tightly. It's all the insurance I need tonight, he told himself solemnly, hearing the faint purr of Pat's radio within.

He watched his hand lift slowly and fasten on that knob of brass. Then he went in swiftly, without pausing for the formality of a knock.

### CHAPTER 3



R. MARTIN ASH pulled his Cadillac convertible into the curb between two quarreling push-carts. On leaving the hospital, instead of turning north, uptown to the Waldorf, and the charity fete that his wife was sponsoring in the grand ballroom, he had swung south, skirting the dank wall of the brewery, then entered a block that was half alley, half front yard for the teeming dwellings that opened on either side. Despite the hour, the whole area still pulsed with life, each stoop clotted with humanity, each window black with gossiping heads. Martin Ash stepped out to the sidewalk, and mounted the steps of the only home he had ever known.

"Hi, Doc! How goes it?"

He shouted a greeting to the tailor who peered up from his basement lair—and wondered if Rifkin was calculating the price of his tailcoat. Not that the doctor and his evening dress were strangers to this neighborhood: Martin Ash seldom left the hospital without looking in on his parents for a moment, regardless of the hour.

Childhood closed around him as he opened the door to the apartment on the second floor. There sat his father in his favorite chair, a shawl over his shoulders despite the heat outside, with the radio, as always, playing softly close to his ear. All but blind, the old man could barely distinguish dark from light, but his facile fingers could tune in his favorite symphonies.

"Hello, Martin. You're late tonight."

"Hello, Papa." The director of East Side General bent above the armchair to kiss his father's wrinkled forehead. His mother had already bustled out of the small kitchen, with both arms held out in greeting. No matter how often her son might visit her, she offered the same welcome—the embrace for the wanderer returned from far places. Tonight, however, as she held him at arm's length to admire his evening clothes, Rebecca's face showed real concern.

"Already you are late at Catherine's party. . . ."

"It's only a charity dance, Mama. It will go on without me."

"Catherine will not go on without you, my son. She needs you beside her, now."

"I'm on my way, Mother. I only stopped by for a moment—to see how you two were—"

"Such nonsense! Would we, perhaps, fly away?" But his mother's tone had already betrayed her. So had the slow, groping pressure of his father's hand, as it closed on his own.

"What is the music, Papa?"

"*Ach*, Martin! With all I have told you, can you not recognize Beethoven?"

"Of course. The *Moonlight*—"

"The *Appassionata*, son. For shame!" Martin senior was chuckling in his beard. It was a standing family joke that Martin junior had no ear for music—and less memory. "Someday, we will go over the symphonies together—when you have more time. . . ."

"I wish we could, Papa. I don't seem to have time for anything these days—outside the hospital." Not even for Catherine, he thought—and admitted that he had come here deliberately, to postpone their meeting even longer—

His mother's voice broke in. "Come to the kitchen, Martin, and see what Catherine gave me. A *dishwasher* yet!"

The kitchen was fully modern—he had seen to that years ago. Tonight, it still gleamed like new, from the electric range to the

double porcelain sink. Beside the huge white rectangle of the refrigerator was an automatic dishwasher — Catherine's latest gift. Martin stared at it blankly, feeling a little of his resentment dissolve. It was no secret that Catherine was fond of his parents. Was this, perhaps, her latest bribe — her hope of lessening their unspoken objections to the hospital's move uptown?

"Catherine was telling me how wonderful the new hospital will be when it is built," his mother said quietly. "It's a fine wife you have got, Martin —" But her voice had broken after all, and she did not quite meet his eyes. "We will miss you."

His father spoke above the dying strains of the music. "This is no longer the ghetto, Rebecca — in America, there is no law to say the family must be close together. Martin has his life. He must live it — so."

"But if he goes uptown —"

"Always our boy will do what is best."

"But that's just it, Papa." Martin Ash was barely conscious that he had spoken aloud. "What is best? What is best for the people who come to our clinics? Even if they could find us uptown, we will frighten them away. This hospital is part of its neighborhood. Would it not be a sin to move it? What is best?"

"What will make you happy — that is best for you and for the hospital, my son."

"But Catherine —" He let the thought take its own shape, knowing they would understand him without words. His wife had never hurt his parents consciously, either by word or deed. In her way, he knew that she loved them quite as much as he — even though she understood them not at all. To her, they would always be an uninspiring old Jewish couple with their best years behind them — and no adventure before them but death. She could never see them with his eyes — or understand their need for his nearness.

"Catherine is your wife," the old man said. "What she does, she thinks is best for you. But if she knows you will not be happy, she will do what you want."

"*Ach*, Martin," said his mother. "She is your wife, indeed. And she gives tonight a ball. You must go to her now."

On the stair again, he knew that he had not found the answer that he sought. The answer was waiting, deep in his own soul, and he was afraid to look there. Afraid to admit, even for an instant, that he sided with Catherine now. . . . *She will do what you want, if she knows you will not be happy.* How could he put his unhappiness into words — when Catherine had been his symbol of felicity for 20 years?

She had made him what he was. The Marty Aschoff he remembered was only a ghost, a figment of his parents' love who existed only in their stolen moments together. Martin Ash was his own man — and he deserved only the best, because he had earned the best.

Out on the street, there was his convertible, snugly parked between the two quarreling pushcarts. . . . Even tonight, he could smile at the solemn ring of children that surrounded it, without daring to approach within touching distance of its glittering mudguards. Had a stranger dared to park here, the small fry from this block would have swarmed over his car in an instant, to pry loose what souvenirs they could.

Dr. Ash's Cadillac was something else again. Dr. Ash was a legend the slum dwellers respected — and yearned with all their beings to emulate.

Perhaps Marty Aschoff was not a ghost, after all. Perhaps it was he who wanted desperately to sit in that skyscraper office, in the clean air of upper Manhattan. To read the word, *Director*, as if in a mirror through his anteroom door. To feel the respect and envy (particularly the envy) of the Park Avenue doctors who would still snub him if they dared.

He sighed — and the tenement street seemed to give back his sigh. Dr. Ash felt a tear gather at the corner of one eyelid as he slid under the wheel of his car, to keep his rendezvous with the woman he loved — in a world where he would be forever alien.

THE BEETHOVEN hour on the radio was nearing its end, and the last movement of the *Emperor* poured from Pat Reed's expensive portable set. High in Schuyler Tower, in the suite that she had occupied for a week now, the tall girl in the bed drank in the music with all her senses — savoring the last pounding rhythm as intently as she enjoyed the presence of Dr. Andrew Gray, whose stethoscope was cold against her heart. This late bed check was only routine. Andy had come here tonight for her sake.

He straightened at the bedside and said to the floor nurse. "Continue medication, Miss Eccles. I think that will be all."

Pat spoke sweetly, as the nurse moved out of the radius of her bed lamp. "Will I live, Doctor?"

"I think so, Miss Reed." He had always been careful to observe the formalities in the presence of the hospital staff. "Of course, the final decision is Dr. Plant's, not mine." Plant was Pat Reed's personal physician, and one of the city's leading internists. It was Plant who had suggested that she come to Schuyler Tower, for the rest she so desperately needed. The phrase had been hers, not Plant's. . . . Most humans in this century, she reflected, were desperately in need of rest. It was only the few who could enjoy it on their own terms.

She could afford to wait while Andy and his floor nurse conferred at the foot of her bed. It had been an amusing game so far — even if it was a trifle prolonged. Bed rest and a rigorous diet. Sedatives and an hour's exposure on the sun deck each afternoon. Exhaustive tests, to prove once again that Patricia Reed (like her grandfather who had founded the dynasty in Chicago beef) was a perfect physical specimen, ready to outfight any man at his own game. An elaborate subterfuge, in short, while she waited for Andy Gray to admit that existence without her was unthinkable.

When you've had your own way from childhood, she reflected, waiting for anything can come hard. Especially, a two-legged bundle of prejudices that calls himself a man. She had no doubt whatever of Andy's eventual capitulation.



Her heart pounded as memories of the two weeks in Hawaii, when she had first known him, came surging back. She had been on one of her interminable, restless cruises then; Andy had been fresh from service on the Asian mainland — a disillusioned veteran who had seemed, at first glance, unlikely material for romance.

Orders had called him to San Francisco (and his final discharge from the Marine Corps) long before she could tire of him. In fact, she was troubled by the nagging suspicion that he had been glad when the orders came. They had corresponded in the years that followed — while she had waited for him to give up this hospital job and return to her in earnest. She had seen him only a few times in that period. And on these occasions, he had shown no sign of making the job of entertaining Pat Reed a full-time career.

There had been other men in those years — but none of them could make her forget Andy. None had been more than a diversion, really, while she awaited the moment when she could make him her own.

She would be good for Andy, she thought, watching him through half-closed lids. Her sophistication would be the perfect foil for his gaunt integrity. She could not help but enrich his outlook, even as she burnished him into a softer pattern. And, of course, her money would be there always, smoothing his path, winning him the recognition he deserved. . . . She opened her eyes wide. The nurse had just gone out on quiet tiptoe. For one moment, Pat was sure Andy would follow her into the corridor. Then he came toward the bed and took one of her hands in his.

"It's about time," she said.

"I quite agree," he said. "What are you doing here?"

"Resting — on doctor's orders."

"What do we have here that you want?"

Pat offered her famous grin, then let her fingers run around the plane of his jaw, until they lost themselves in his hair. . . .  
"Switch the radio, won't you, Andy? Wayne King is on NBC."

Andy went dutifully to the dial, tuning out the dying strains of

Beethoven for the smooth minor rhythm of *The Blue Danube*. But he stayed outside the circle of light around her bed: the craggy planes of his face were an enigma in the half-dark.

"Wayne King is playing at the Waldorf tonight," he said. "At Catherine Ash's charity ball."

"What's that got to do with you and me?"

"A parable, Pat," he said quietly. "Catherine, and Martin Ash. And you, and I."

"Why should we resemble Catherine and Martin?"

"At the moment," he said, "we're four of a kind. Which is why I keep my distance."

Pat stared up at him round-eyed — her wonder was genuine. She knew Catherine Ash well enough — a rather silly woman, with more kindness than judgment, who felt she could buy prestige for her tenement-born husband as casually as another woman might buy pearls. Not that she had any real prejudice against Martin, Pat added quickly. But it *was* grotesque of Catherine, insisting that her money could open all doors.

"If you're comparing yourself to Martin Ash —"

"You want to marry me," he said dully. "Three days out of five, I want you — on any terms you'd care to name. Doesn't that make us four of a kind? And would you say it's the sort of contract that tends to happiness?"

"I haven't offered you a contract yet, Andy."

"It's immodest of me, I know," he said. "But what else could bring you here?"

"Dr. Plant's orders," she said mockingly. Then, changing her whole tone, making her voice small, "It's true I've come to you, Andy. Because I couldn't stay away. Isn't that why *you're* here tonight?"

"I think we should have this thing out," he said. "Even the orderlies are taking bets on the outcome."

Pat shrugged. "Naturally. What are the odds?"

"Everyone expects me to win you — or is it vice versa?"

"You might be a bit more gallant about it, Andy." I'll make him kiss me, she told herself, obeying the instinct that had guided her in the past. "Dr. Plant is sending me home tomorrow," she said, lying back, closing her eyes. "Are you afraid to say good night?"

She heard him take a step toward her and then another. Then he was kissing her, and her heart was beating like the tom-tom of a dance-drum — only it wasn't a tom-tom she heard, but a soft tapping on the outer door of her suite.

Even in her rage, she could admire Andy's aplomb. His "Come!" was a permission to enter as casual as his manner — or the stethoscope that he was balancing idly between his palms, like a badge of office.

The floor nurse entered. "The operator wants you, Dr. Gray. Emergency on Medicine Three."

"Tell them I'm on my way." He turned to Pat. "I'll run along now, if you'll forgive me."

But her eyes held him at the bedside until the floor nurse had vanished. "Be honest, Andy," she said. "Are you glad or sorry you were saved by the bell?"

"At this moment," he said, "I wouldn't risk an answer."

"That's all I need to know," she said. "I won't even ask you to come back later. Tomorrow will do nicely."

"You'll be out of here tomorrow."

"And so will you, if I have my way," she said. "Good night, darling. Go save another life, if you must."

She watched him pause for an instant in the doorway to gather authority about him like invisible armor. He went out without speaking — and she knew he was absorbed by the problem that awaited him in the operating room, back again in the safe world of his profession.

TONY KORFF was deep in his recurrent dream — the dream of marching men. He himself stood in the reviewing stand as the

legions went past. But something was wrong with the picture tonight. The marching feet, which should have thundered in perfect rhythm to the distant band, were now gliding, as one man, in mincing waltz-time.

*The Blue Danube*, he thought. Only it's a Red Danube today. . . . All at once, he was wide-awake. He cut off his bedside radio—and the music of Wayne King. Knowing that sleep was behind him now, he reached for a cigarette and fumbled for the gin bottle. Gin—the tippie for failures!

The drink did not numb his racing brain: in fact, he could not remember when his thoughts had been clearer. It was quite true that the night brought counsel, he reflected. Too often, for those who could not sleep, it was only the counsel of despair, the sober case history of the doomed and damned.

Take your own case history, Tony Korff. A scion of the slums, raised in an orphanage, hating the world with your first conscious breath. It could be truly said that the Tony Korffs of this world were nursed on hate.

*You*, at least, escaped the shadows before it was too late. America has given you everything, before the Army and after. Why should you hate the smug, well-fed American world even more? Why should you feel only contempt for Andy Gray, who has been good to you in his fashion? One stroke of luck is all you need now—a break that will give you the capital to buy a good practice. Or an appointment where good pickings are at hand.

He ignored the still, small voice that reminded him an assistant residency was the best he could hope for anywhere. As for capital—well, that was a dream he had abandoned long ago, save in gin-fogged moments such as this. When the fog refused to descend, blotting out the hard pattern of reality, he could only writhe in a bath of sweat—and wish that he had died in his first Berlin street brawl.

Perhaps (since he would not sleep tonight) it would be well to visit the burn patient once again. The man had shown no real

sign of reviving when he had left him a few hours ago, after making sure that the tape-recorder, and its attendant policeman, were correctly placed at the bedside. And yet, these moribund cases sometimes showed a last, strange spark of vitality in the hours between midnight and dawn.

His mind turned to the story he had seen in the bulldog editions of the tabloids. No one would believe the solemn fiction that the trouble had begun at Brookhaven. And yet, the police had shown a touch of genius in admitting that one victim was still breathing—and expected to make a statement. If the cold-blooded criminal responsible for this business had read the first editions (and it was reasonable to assume that he would be eager for the official version of his crime), the story might bring results, after all.

The phone burred softly at his bedside. It was Andy Gray, his voice oddly gay for the hour.

"This time I have the dilly," he said. "Get over to Medicine Three as fast as you can dress, Tony."

"Who is it this time, Andy?"

"Believe it or not, it's Bert Rilling. Seems he was working late at his office—Plant just brought him in personally. He thinks it's a femoral embolism. I'm inclined to agree, sight unseen. George Plant isn't often wrong on his diagnosis."

No wonder you're so gay, thought Tony sourly: vascular surgery had always been Andy's specialty, and he had scored most of his personal triumphs in that field. It was Andy's uncanny luck to be on the spot tonight, when they brought in the brewer, as famous for his political power and personal philanthropies as he was for the beer that poured through his warehouse doors in an unending stream.

If Andy had been absent tonight, thought Tony, I could have handled this case. *I* could have stood at the grateful patient's bedside afterward and accepted his thanks for saving his life.

In his best professional manner, Tony said, "I'm on my way."

IN THE grand ballroom of the Waldorf, Catherine Ash watched her husband waltzing to the music of Wayne King. Thanks to the dancing lessons which she had felt were so important, he could waltz as well as any man in that huge ballroom. She had never regretted that frivolity for a moment. Any more than she regretted her investment with the Mayos (when Martin's whole postgraduate future had been at stake), or the fortune she had poured into East Side General to keep its bookkeepers sane. Martin had justified all her hopes, on every front.

I've lifted him out of his alien background, she told herself. Once the new hospital is a reality, the break with the slums will be complete. . . . For the first time tonight, her eyes clouded with doubt. Why did Martin still refuse to discuss details of the transfer—even now, when the papers were all but drawn? Why (when he admitted all her arguments were just) did he withdraw even deeper into himself, no matter how adroitly she brought up the question of their future?

Naturally, Father and Mother Ash would object to the move (she never used the name they clung to, in these silent dialogues). What if they did feel lonely—in the tenement, so far from their famous son? Was it her fault that these strange old people chose to live in the slums?

In her secret heart, she was glad they insisted on remaining downtown. And yet, she could hardly deny that Martin himself shrank from the impending move. It was almost as though the very concept had risen like a barrier between them.

But she could not afford to admit such thoughts beyond the threshold of her mind. She looked up sharply as the rhythm of the orchestra changed: had she thought of it in advance, she would have ordered them to play no rumbas tonight. Martin did not always rumba well with a strange partner. . . . But a quick glance told her that her husband was no longer on the floor. Certainly, after his tardy appearance, he would not have returned to the hospital without sending her some word. Catherine moved

quickly from her place on the dais, skirted the sweep of dance floor, and hurried into the outer lobby. She saw her husband at once, just as he emerged from a phone booth.

"Martin!"

He came to her at once with his hands held out — offering the smile that he reserved to chide her for her vehemence.

Warmed by the pressure of his hands, she decided to be light. "You were calling the hospital. I can always tell —"

"My last call tonight, I assure you."

He slipped an arm through hers; for a moment, they stood side by side on the steps to the dance floor. "I told you about the burn cases we've been treating with ACTH —"

"Yes, dear. I wish I understood better."

"I had to be sure there was no change. Andy had another piece of news. We've bagged Bert Rilling at last."

Catherine kept her lightness with an effort. She was not sure if Martin knew that this same Bert Rilling had already agreed to defray most of the expense of their projected move uptown. "Don't sound as though you hunted patients with an elephant gun, dear."


"Plant brought him in a half hour ago. The kickback of a mitral lesion, they think. It's an operation I'd give a great deal to perform myself — even if it is Andy's preserve."

"You promised, Martin . . . !"

He smiled down at her. "I haven't forgotten this is our dance, Catherine."

He held out his arms as he spoke, and she moved into his embrace without another word. For tonight, at least, he was all hers: she smiled up at her husband for reassurance. Her triumph faded instantly as she read the loneliness in his eyes — and knew that his mind was far away. Pressed close in the sharp rhythm of the dance, she begged him to come back to her. Begged wordlessly and with all her heart — out of a loneliness that matched his own.

## CHAPTER 4

ATCHING Tony Korff scrub just outside the operating suite, Andy Gray stole a final look at his instrument nurse, already hard at work under the lights. He would never know if Julia had noticed the faint trace of lipstick at the corner of his jaw, when he hurried to the medical wing and found her there. For no reason at all, he felt sure that Julia had known he was in Pat's suite all along.

He would never be certain. It was enough that Julia should stand there at the instrument table, ready to take his orders, to merge her individuality with his own. He smiled at her through the glass wall of the scrub room—and felt his heart give an unaccountable leap as the smile was returned.

Perhaps she understands me better than I do myself, he thought.

The orderlies had just wheeled in the patient. He glanced curiously at the sheet-draped figure, as his trained ear caught an ominous tremolo note in Rilling's deep, snoring breath.

"How much have you picked up, Tony?"

"Rilling was working late at his office—as you said. He passed out at his desk."

"In the brewery?"

"In the brewery." The senior intern leaned over the antiseptic and lifted his dripping arms from the solution. "It seems he got to a telephone just in time. Plant's coming in now—why not ask him yourself?"

Andy grinned as a nurse came forward to tie his mask. He had not missed the gin on Tony's breath—or Tony's sullen air. Yet he had no fears as to the senior intern's ability to slide into harness. Tony had been in the same condition before, and risen to the emergency bell as automatically as a fire horse.



"Come when you're ready," he said. "We'll give the preop-anesthesia a chance to work a moment more."

Dr. George Plant stood above the table, chatting with Julia. A successful internist, with a girth that matched his affability, Plant had always been a favorite with the surgeons. Tonight, he offered Andy the tribute of a roly-poly bow. "The right man for the right job," he said. "I'm lucky to find you here."

"You're sure it's a femoral embolism?"

"With a mitral valve lesion to spark it," said Plant. "See for yourself, Doctor. I've ridden herd on this fellow for years now."

Andy looked down at the figure on the table, a blond Teuton with a head like a swollen bullet, his skin tone already graying under the oxygen mask the anesthetist had just fitted above his mouth and nose.

"There have been clots before, I gather?"

"A few small ones—but nothing like this."

Andy nodded. The picture was clear before he folded back the sheet that covered the brewer's legs. A heart damaged by rheumatism—with a leaky valve between the chambers of the left side—could be a traitor to the body it served. Thanks to the irritation of those chamber walls, the blood had begun to clot there, instead of moving through the circulation. Breaking loose at last, these clots had traveled down the branching arterial system, from larger branch to smaller, until they reached a vessel through which they could not pass.

So far, the backfire of the circulation had not been serious. Tonight a larger clot had closed one of the great trunk lines of the blood stream—and only the scalpel could save the patient from cyanosis and death. Amputation would have been the solution a few years ago. Today, thanks to the miracles of vascular surgery, it was sometimes possible to open the blood vessel involved, and remove the obstruction with no danger to adjacent tissue.

"Did he say anything when he regained consciousness?" Andy asked Plant.

"He was too weak to be coherent. Needless to say I came prepared—he's already had adrenalin and intramuscular digitalis while we waited for the ambulance."

Andy murmured his approval as he began his examination. The brewer's respiration was labored—and the oxygen had not improved his color noticeably: the skin of his legs was already dusky blue, almost to the thighs. Andy's fingers followed the course of the arteries in either leg. They found what they sought quickly enough, as they moved up from ankle bone and back again—the absence of pulsation throughout the legs. Already, the picture was ominous. A clot in the thigh, blocking the artery itself, inevitably slowed the whole blood current, building along its whole length until the original obstruction was extended far back toward the heart, closing adjacent channels as it thickened.

"Can you localize the block, Dr. Gray?"

"Not precisely. But I'll bet on a saddle thrombus at the bifurcation of the aorta." He heard Julia draw in her breath as she realized the patient's danger. What he had called a "bifurcation" was the division of the great trunk artery that issued from the heart itself. A saddle thrombus would be merely a Y-shaped clot, riding at the point of division, with extensions down the large femoral arteries of each leg.

"That means an embolectomy, of course."

"Precisely," said Andy. "D'you think he'll stand it, Doctor?"

"He'll have to," said Plant.

"You've notified his relatives?"

"He hasn't any, so far as I know. I'll take the responsibility."

Andy nodded briskly. Already, his mind was deep in the job ahead—too deep, in fact, to pause over externals. Later, he would remember the strange, hard light in Tony Korff's eyes as he in turn examined the patient—the sharp intake of breath as though the refugee had found in the man under the lights a long-lost brother. For the present, there was no time for personalities. Andy's vital forces were focused on the task at hand.

"If you'll come with me to the cabinet, Miss Talbot . . ."

Julia held the tray while he went down the shelves, selecting the special instruments he must use. Slender, flexible bougies tipped with delicate steel corkscrews, which were usually employed to dislodge stones from the ureters. Packs of gossamer-silk threads, streaming from needles that seemed mere flashes of light. Dura needles, used ordinarily to suture brain tissue. A Cameron light for abdominal surgery—that would be just as valuable for the job tonight . . . Finally, a probationer was sent down to Obstetrics, to fetch several rolls of umbilical tape, which could be used at the final stages of the operation.

"We'll use local anesthesia, with an injection of sodium pentothal," said Andy. "And don't let up on that oxygen for a minute, Dr. Evans." He paused beside the anesthetist as he nodded to each of his team in turn—a captain who knew that his orders would be followed without question.

Andy noted with approval that the refugee's slight truculence had vanished.

"What approach will you use, Andy?" Tony asked.

"The right femoral, I think. We can open just below the inguinal ligament. I'm pretty sure there's an obstruction in the artery on that side."

"Can you reach the bifurcation?"

"It's possible—if the clot isn't riding too high."

"What if it is?"

"Then we must open the abdomen and expose the aorta itself. That's a last hope, I'll admit. But if we don't reach that clot, we've lost him, anyway."

When he, too, was scrubbed and gowned, Andy paused just outside the circle of light to take in the scene again. Julia was giving her own last instructions to the student nurse who would assist her. Dr. Plant had moved behind the glass window of the observers' gallery, surrendering the field to the surgeon in charge. Tony still hovered above the table, studying Rilling with that

same curious intentness. . . . The patient himself had been prepared expertly for the operation, his legs encased in sterile towels almost to the waist. The operative area was exposed in a long rectangle of thigh, groin and abdomen, brightly carmined by the antiseptic swab.

As he approached the table at last, Andy noted that the cyanosis of the skin was even more pronounced — the fatal, dark-blue tone that told of the oxygen lack beneath. Rilling was dying below the waist — dying by inches, now that the life-giving element could no longer reach his tissues via the blood stream. The plasma needle at the elbow vein of one arm could not remedy that lack, though it would help sustain the vital organs until the surgeon came to the rescue. For the present, the flow was cut down to a slow trickle, for it would have been fatal to overload the already weakened heart.

"How's the pressure, Dr. Evans?"

"Ninety over fifty," said the anesthetist. "Pulse none too steady. You might as well begin. He's as good now as he'll ever be."

The instrument table moved closer as Andy squared off above the patient. As always, he felt the familiar contraction of his heart, in the second before the first special tool came into his hand — in this case, the syringe of novocain that would block off the field of surgery.

His eyes met Julia's — but she was a girl no longer. Like Korff and the probationer, like the very instruments that waited in shining rows to obey his fingers, Julia Talbot was part of the complex mechanism he controlled — a machine that had already begun to function, as smoothly as a car going into gear.

The slender novocain needle plunged, reaching the fossa ovalis, an opening in the tough sheath that covered the thigh muscles. It was here that a branch of the femoral vein emerged, the surgeon's obvious entry point. A second, larger needle, probing deeper, released a mixture of novocain and adrenalin — a measure designed to constrict blood vessels in the area, and numb the

surrounding tissue for a longer period. A final thrust drove the needle deep into the upper thigh, to block the nerves.

"Local anesthesia completed," said Andy. "Scalpel, please!"

But Julia had already slapped the knife into his palm. He watched it move swiftly, as though it possessed a life of its own, making a six-inch incision in the humped fat of the thigh.

"Skin towels, please."

Tony began to clamp the sterile toweling on the edges of the wound as the scalpel clattered into a waiting basin. That particular knife would not be used again. No matter how carefully the skin was treated with antiseptic, there was always danger of carrying bacteria downward from the pores and hair follicles.

With the incision clamped wide and protected by its sterile dressing, Andy accepted a fresh scalpel from Julia and began to dissect in earnest. The knife went about its work in long, fluid strokes, opening the fatty layers. In a matter of seconds, it seemed, a bluish structure came into view, running downward and inward toward the knee.

"The saphenous vein," said Andy. At moments such as this, he found himself speaking like a lecturer on anatomy. No matter how often the miracle of the human organism was revealed to him under the knife, the exploration had an air of high adventure. "We can trace it into the fossa ovalis, and find the femoral where it joins the large vein." He continued in rhythm with the fast-moving knife, for the benefit of the probationer who was staring round-eyed into the wound, from a vantage point above Julia's shoulder. "That vein, as you know, returns blood from foot and leg; the artery that is our objective should lie beside it—unless this fellow is a museum piece."

He had already slipped a length of tape beneath the saphenous vein. Now, lifting it gently, he began to dissect along its length, going ever deeper as the vein seemed to burrow downward into its tight ambush of fat. So far there had been virtually no bleeding. Normally, blood supply in this region was profuse, and the con-

trol of vessels presented a real problem for the surgeon's assistant. Tonight, thanks to the circulation block above, the area seemed lifeless — as though Bert Rilling were already a corpse, ready for the autopsy table.

"Here's the fossa. I'd better infiltrate again."

Julia had already offered the syringe, its barrel angled precisely, so that Andy's fingers could slip into the metal rings that controlled the thrust. Moving carefully now, he forced the needle point into the glistening white layer that covered muscles and vein at this point. Then, as Tony grasped the guiding tape beneath the vein, Andy lifted the tissue at the edge of the fossa in a pair of forceps — and, using small dissecting scissors, slit it boldly, on the side toward the foot. Again, he found, his anatomy was faultless. As the tough white structure parted, he looked down at artery and vein, lying together in the same fibrous tube, between the muscle layers deep in the wound.

"Cameron light, Miss Talbot."

A second probationer, outside the operative zone, took Julia's nod and cut the overhead switch. At that same instant, the sterilized lamp-carrier, moving swiftly above the incision, bathed the wound in a penetrating glow — highlighting the dissected tissue clearly, exposing the deep structures beneath with all the sharpness of a textbook plate. The scalpel enlarged the slit in the fascia, until there was room to slip the light into the wound itself, directly beneath the femoral artery. The picture completed itself, with every ominous factor present. Toward the knee, the light glowed pinkly through the artery wall — and its contents of liquid blood. Above, toward the body trunk, the glow was masked entirely. The dead-black silhouette told its own story, with no need of words.

Andy spoke quietly. "I'll try to enlarge the incision before opening the artery. Obviously, we'll need room." The scalpel was already at work, opening the trench where vein and artery lay, until the great trunk vessels were exposed in an eight-inch ditch. Even

as he worked, he could not help but note the strange inertness of those matching vessels.

"Tape, please."

The tough umbilical tape slapped into his palm. Inching it beneath the femoral artery, he worked slowly upward, as high as he could reach. This, as the whole team knew, was the potential lifesaver—if and when he could dislodge the clot. Thanks to the tape, he could shut off the resultant blood flow instantly, until he could suture the incision he was about to make in the arterial wall.

"I'm going to open the femoral artery, Tony," he said. "We'll put in the closing sutures first." That had to be done before bleeding could interfere—the prudent vascular surgeon, thinking far ahead of the exploring knife, was always ready for an emergency before it could develop.

It took all the skill in his fingers to manipulate the tiny curved needles, until the silken sutures had looped the portion of the artery above and below the clot. It was a tedious job, since it was impossible, at this point, to secure the strands where they would be needed later, in the event of a sudden, uncontrollable hemorrhage. He let out his breath in a sigh that was echoed round the table as the task was finished—and did not dare to check the clock on the facing wall.

Another scalpel came into his hand, as he focused at last on the opaque barrel of the femoral artery—the battleground where he must win or lose a life in the next few moments. The wall of this vital vessel was tough, resisting the knife. When it opened at last he knew that he had attained his first objective. Here, at least, was the terminus of the clot. The slow dark ooze that appeared under the steel (a graphic contrast to the spout that would have issued from an unblocked artery) drew its own clinical diagram.

"As we thought, the obstruction is practically complete. Let's see how easily it dislodges."

The forceps had already moved into the opening of the arterial wall, fastening gingerly on the ragged end of the blackish, viscous

clot that projected downward, clear in the operative field. The obstruction came free with deceptive ease: this portion, as he knew only too well, could be delivered entire. The trick lay in the surgeon's fingers, and their degree of pressure.

Two inches, then three. He dropped the dark, malignant structure in the waiting basin and probed further. As he had expected, the upper portion of the obstruction (extending into the patient's torso to a spot no surgeon could delimit) refused to budge. He lifted his eyes from the wound for the first time — permitting a wholehearted curse to escape his lips as his questing fingers emerged from the wound with a broken bit of clot, and nothing more.

"Steady all — this isn't easy."

It was part of his character that he refused to face the thought of failure, even now.

"Will you pass the corkscrew bougie, Miss Talbot?"

The special instrument was in his palm now. He eased it into the artery opening, working it slowly upward — and breathed more easily when he felt resistance, not too far above his point of incision. The bougie turned slowly between his fingers, working its way into the broken terminus of the clot, much as a practiced hand might manipulate a corkscrew in a half-rotted cork. A gentle tug, and another tentative turn, convinced him that he had found purchase, of a sort. And yet, he drilled patiently on, inserting the bougie still farther before he dared to pull back in earnest.

"Ready on the tape, Tony. It's now or never."

The whole table held its breath with the surgeon as the bougie began to inch its way out of the wound. There was the clot once again, clinging stubbornly to the artery even now. For one sickening instant, Andy was sure that the bougie would not hold. . . . Then he let out his breath, along with the other watchers, as clot and corkscrew twisted from the depths of the incision, bit by bit. Even now, he used all his iron technique to work slowly — letting the obstruction follow his guiding fingers, with no persuasion



from the instrument that had anchored it and compelled it to yield.

Four inches were delivered now—then six—then eight—a dark, irregular structure. Finally, when it seemed as though the clot was never-ending, the elongated end appeared in the wound, tapered smoothly where it had fitted into the artery of the other leg.

“Tape—quickly!”

The red geyser that had spouted into the wound was both a warning and an accolade. A twist of the tough umbilical tape, in Tony Korff's fingers, anchored the artery and the flow in a split second. Andy stood by for an instant as the senior intern sponged away the blood with his free hand. Then he began to work smoothly—all tension gone now that their objective had been attained. The sutures dropped easily into place, tightening the femoral artery above and below the point of entry. Stitch by stitch, like a cautious housewife, he brought the arterial wound into snug alignment, knitting the edges into an all but undamaged line that would heal smoothly, allowing no nucleus for another blood clot later.

Tony spoke for the first time since the operation began, as the surgeon stepped back at last.

“What about the other leg? Are you sure the whole clot is extracted?”

“The end of it looked smooth enough. We can be sure from the skin tone, when we've closed.”

It was a routine matter to repair the incision and place the dressings. Results were instantly apparent when the toweling was folded back on the patient's other limb. Already, a pinkish tinge was creeping into the skin as blood began to pour through the arteries once more.

“Will you step down to the floor, Dr. Plant, and test his heart?”

The pudgy doctor moved quickly under the lights. Andy could sense the beaming smile under Plant's mask as he lifted the stethoscope from Rilling's chest.

"He'll come out of this one, too, Andy — thanks to that knife of yours."

Andy smiled. "Thank the team, Doctor. I could never have done it alone."

"You saved his life, there's no doubt of that. My job is to slow him down in the future."

Pete Collins put a frowzy head through the operating-room door — a bizarre intrusion into this world of medicine. "Can I say he passed a comfortable night, gentlemen — or is that premature?"

Andy wondered what the newshawk was doing at the hospital at this hour, but he was too tired to inquire. He allowed himself the luxury of a yawn. "Keep out of my way, Pete; I'm sure Dr. Plant will give you the details."

"I've got the details already," said the journalist. "And I'm throwing the lead your way, Andy. On page one. Aren't you even grateful?"

"Right now," said Andy, "all I want is coffee and sleep, in that order." He could feel the expected letdown — a blend of nervous exhaustion and plain, bone-deep weariness — invade his spirits as he stepped aside to let the interns wheel out the patient. And then, as he untied his mask and found himself facing Julia Talbot, the weariness lessened abruptly.

Before the wall of hospital protocol could settle between them he said, "Will you join me in a cup, Miss Talbot?"

Even though she was standing in the half-shadows, he could see the girl color faintly. "Of course, Doctor. We keep a pot boiling in the diet kitchen when we're operating."

"As though I didn't know," he said, smiling.

He stood aside to let her precede him down the corridor.

JULIA emerged from the diet kitchen with a coffee mug in each hand and smiled down at the tousled dark head that rested against the back of the armchair in the anteroom, a kind of cubbyhole

giving access to the corridor of the surgical ward. He looks ten years younger, she thought, and putting down both cups she settled in the facing armchair. Despite her best resolves, it was hard to remain casual. A sixth sense insisted: something is preying on his mind — a trouble that we can share. A dilemma that we might even solve together . . .

Andy opened his eyes and met her questioning look. "Have I been dozing long?"

"A half hour, perhaps."

"And you kept the coffee warm," he said. "You're a girl after my own heart."

"Tell me this much, Andy," she said. "When have you last felt rested?" She wondered, fleetingly, if she had ever used his first name before.

"I can answer that by the book," he said. "On my last vacation in Florida. Two years ago, to be exact — when I visited my brother down on the Gulf."

"You look rested now," she said. "I wonder why?"

"Now that you mention it," he said. "I was wondering myself. D'you know what I was dreaming?"

"Tell me."

"I dreamed I was home again," he said. "Odd, isn't it — when I never really had a home?"

"Are you asking me to be sorry?"

"Don't be anything but yourself," he said. "Tell me what you're after here."

"Nothing I haven't got," she said quickly. "I just happen to be a nurse who enjoys nursing."

"I don't believe a word," he said. "You don't believe yourself."

"Have it your way," she said. "I *would* like a place of my own some day. Not just a home, either. A clinic somewhere — a place where you could really heal the sick, without thinking of the fee —" She broke off suddenly as she read the light in his eyes, and wondered if she had already stumbled on forbidden ground.

"You should meet my brother," he said. "Timmie would give you a job tomorrow."

"I've always wanted to go to Florida," she said. "Is he a doctor, too?"

"Timmie's a doctor of souls," said Andy. "The Reverend Timothy Gray. He's had enough big-parish offers to make him famous, but he's chosen to set up his altar in a Florida county — where half his parishioners are Greek fishermen, or grits-and-bacon crackers. Can you picture him at all?"

"Very clearly," said Julia. "I'd like to know him better."

"Timmie could use a district nurse," he said. "Would you give up this life to help him?"

"Won't you go back yourself, Andy — eventually?"

"Don't answer my question with another."

"I don't want to be rich, Andy," she said. "I don't even want to be famous."

"You still haven't answered."

She spoke quickly, before she lost her courage. "I'll be your assistant," she said. "If you'll offer me the job."

"Just like that?"

"Why not? I've seen you work. I know you'd make a go of it."

"I won't deny I've dreamed of going back," he said slowly. "I've even drawn plans for the hospital I'd build next door to Timmie's hurricane-proof church. It's an innocent enough dream, as dreams go. Too bad it isn't for either of us. . . ."

"Give me one reason why."

"Because what you just said simply isn't true. Because we both mean to succeed here."

"Isn't your brother an even greater success?"

"By his yardstick, yes. It isn't mine. I'm Martin Ash's assistant — and I'll probably outlast him. And you'll probably succeed Emily Sloane. If you don't use your wits and marry one of your wealthier patients . . ." He looked at her defiantly. "Did you know that Pat Reed and I were thinking of marriage?"

He wants to hurt me, she told herself. He wants to drive me from his life forever—and he's pulling me closer with every move. "I heard rumors on the grapevine," she said. "No one mentioned you were engaged."

She watched him brace his shoulders—for all the world like a condemned criminal about to walk his last, long mile. "I can marry her when I like," he said.

Julia hugged her knees, and looked up at him unsmiling. "Would you take her down to Florida?"

"She'd take me," he said. "To Palm Beach. Never to my brother's side of the peninsula."

"You'd keep up your practice here?"

"Naturally. I might even let her buy me a hospital." He got up with the words, like an actor who has all but forgotten his exit cue.

Julia sat on, not stirring—still holding him with her eyes. "Tell me one thing more, Dr. Gray. Do you expect to be happy in this marriage?"

"I expect to be busy," he said. "So busy I won't have time to ask myself."

"You could be happy in Florida. I'm sure of that now."

"Maybe a doctor has no right to happiness. Not if he loves his work enough. Have you ever thought of that?" Their eyes held, and his were the first to drop. "If you'll stop by the wards with me for a moment," he said, "I'll see you safely to the nurses' home."

They did not speak again as they walked side by side through the ghostly blue lighting of the corridors and across the white desert of the surgical ward, silent as a tomb in the last hours before dawn. In the detention room at the far end of the wing, they paused for an instant beside the bed where the burn case lay. The man's breathing was stertorous—and it was obvious to Julia that he was dying. She looked questioningly at Andy, but he made no comment as he checked the bed chart and the switch of the wire recorder.

In the corner, hunched like a waxwork effigy, the policeman on guard stared back at them with unwinking eyes. Like others in the hospital, Julia had heard and discounted the rumors that surrounded this strange case. Now it seemed all too likely that this patient, at least, would carry his mystery to the grave. They moved on.

In the spacious private room where Bert Rilling lay, with a special nurse at his elbow, their score as a surgical team was redeemed again. The brewer was sleeping peacefully, after a final injection of heparin and dicoumarin — a medication that decreased the clotting ability of the blood and lessened the chances of further complications. Dr. Plant's own medication — digitalis and other heart stimulants — had been administered an hour ago. There was nothing to do but wait — and trust that Rilling's ailing heart would resume its normal function.

The clock on Schuyler Tower was a dim moon, riding high above their heads as they crossed the sere rectangle of grass that separated the medical wing from the nurses' home. Julia did not dare glance at the hands: tomorrow was another day — and, as usual, tomorrow was already here. She paused on the bottom step and held out her hand.

"You'll go to Florida yet," she said. "To the right side of the peninsula. I'll take odds on that."

"Thanks for your faith," he said. "I wish I could share it."

"Don't you believe in yourself at all, Andy?"

"Only in my work, I'm afraid."

"I haven't heard a word you've said tonight," she whispered. "Not a single word."

"Don't try to make me into something I'm not, Julia."

"Why shouldn't I? Isn't that why women were invented?"

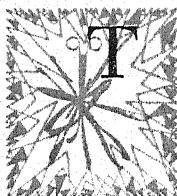
Her hand was still in his as she stepped down to the walk again. When their lips met, she did not know if he had drawn her closer, or if she had walked into his arms of her own accord. She knew only that their kiss was spontaneous, that it was part of the chal-



lenge she had just offered. As she climbed the stair to her room, she was fighting back a crazy urge to tears. Or was it an even crazier urge to laugh aloud?

## *Morning*

### CHAPTER 5



THREE times daily, as regularly as the ebb and flow of the tide below its windows, a surge of humanity passed the marble statue of Christ in the lobby of East Side General Hospital. This morning, when the first stiff-capped nurse came briskly through the great brass doors that were never closed, the lobby floor still gleamed from its daily scrubbing. Corded mountains of newspapers towered beside the service lifts for distribution in Schuyler Tower and the other private wings. Probationers were stirring in the corridors that fanned out from the central rotunda—their blue seersucker uniforms immaculate still, their stocking seams at military perfection. Interns yawned toward their morning rounds—still heavy-eyed from last night's wrestle with death, or last night's poker game. . . . The surgeons, here for early operations before going on to their uptown offices, were marked by their quiet absorption, by the satchels that were their passports.

Moving in the heart of this steady stream, Dr. Martin Ash nodded pleasantly to the doorman and the receptionist, to the switchboard operators just off the rotunda—and, finally, to the battalion of typists who were already hard at work in the ante-room to his office. Behind his desk at last, he attacked his mail with zest, driving two secretaries at top speed. He turned to last night's admissions list and read Andy's report on Bert Rilling.



Only Andy could have saved the brewer, he reflected. . . . Of course, if Rilling lived, he would be one more ally of Catherine's, when the question of moving the hospital could no longer be side-tracked.

"Pardon me, Doctor —"

He glanced up quickly. Miss Steele, his chief secretary, was studying him through her horn rims.

"What is it, Agnes?"

"There's a police inspector in the consulting room — and a Mr. Saunders, from the FBI. They say they have an appointment."

Hurlbut again. Martin Ash frowned; he would have preferred to put off this conference until noon, but he had no excuse. "Tell them I'll be in at once."

Before he rose from his desk, Ash dialed the surgical ward for a last-minute report on the burn case. As he had expected, the situation had worsened. He was still frowning as he opened the door to the small room where he received his more distinguished patients.

Despite his secretary's warning, he could feel himself recoil a step as his eyes met the probing glance of Don Saunders, the man from the FBI. And yet, no voice could have been milder than Saunders', when he rose and held out his hand.

"I know you're busy, Doctor. We'll try to make this short —"

"You've found your man then?"

"Far from it. Can you help us there?"

"No, Mr. Saunders. The patient we brought in last night hasn't regained consciousness. And I'm afraid he's sinking fast."

When the FBI man smiled there was no effect of mirth. "The Inspector and I have already looked in on the fellow. I'd say he was a dead pigeon — wouldn't you, Hurlbut?"

The Inspector sighed and settled deeper in his armchair. "Why he's alive at all is beyond me."

Ash shrugged. "Blame that on our new wonder drugs, gentlemen. But I'm afraid you'll get nothing of value from that source."

"He may still be useful, if we play him right." Saunders leaned forward. "That's why we're asking your help."

"I'm afraid I don't follow."

"You've seen the morning papers, of course?"

"Only the headlines."

"As you know, Hurlbut gave out the story that these two cases were from Brookhaven. Collins' paper played it straight. I can't say as much for the tabloids. One columnist is already screaming that an atomic killer is loose in Manhattan —"

"Do you believe that for a moment?"

The mask of the federal man was bland as cream: only the hard eyes betrayed him. "My beliefs aren't important. In a way, I'm sorry that Hurlbut let the cat out of the bag even this much. Still, it may serve its purpose. Obviously, a killer of some kind is at large. If he's read those stories and pondered them, he may overreach himself, even now, to silence that man upstairs."

Hurlbut cut in heavily. "Every paper said that we were expecting a lead at any time. They made it sound real, too: I almost believed it myself —"

The director of East Side General held up his hand for silence. "You set a neat trap, Inspector," he cut in. "But I can't see that I'm part of the bait —"

"You aren't, Doctor," said Hurlbut dourly. "But East Side General is still the trap. The cordon's still out, you understand. And we're combing the neighborhood with everything we have. We're still hoping our man will panic and break from cover. Suppose he does and gets clear. Suppose he leaves his clock behind —"

"You mean he'd blow up a corner of New York, just to silence that patient upstairs?"

"He might think it was worth while. None of us can be sure he wouldn't."

"What are you suggesting?"

Saunders cut in swiftly. "We're asking if you'd like us to kill the story. Tell the papers the man died without saying a word."

At least that would take the danger away from your doorstep."

Ash sat quietly for a moment, while the implications of the offer sank home. "I wish you'd tell me all you know before I answer," he said.

Inspector and federal man exchanged glances: it was Saunders who spread his hands, like a gambler exposing a pair of deuces. "You've the right to know, Doctor. First off, the chemical was stolen from Oak Ridge —"

"So it *was* a chemical — ?"

"I can't label it," said Saunders. "Not even for you. I can say it's liquid, volatile — and radioactive. Violent enough to be shipped in lead cylinders. Several of them have been pinched recently. Apparently, the thieves have been running them east by truck. We found one of those trucks last midnight. In a boat slip downtown. Its tailboard looked as though it had been toasted in a blast furnace, then chewed up by a dinosaur."

"So it was a chemical that caused the trouble? It wasn't an after-effect of a bomb-blast?"

"I think we can infer as much, Doctor."

Ash met the visitor's eyes. "Was it uranium hexafluoride?"

"No, Doctor," said Saunders patiently. "And we won't play guessing games, if you please. Maybe we're spooking ourselves — imagining this is part of a bomb, and that it's being assembled right under our noses. But it's a possibility we can't overlook. Of course, it's more likely that the stuff is simply being exported, illegally: we know that a syndicate has been running similar kinds of contraband out of New York for a long time. Eventually, we'll break the case. We might crack it now, if you'll play along."

"Can you be more precise about what happened in that truck, before it was abandoned?"

"We can assume the stuff leaked en route. Or when it was being unloaded. If a seal broke on one of those containers, it would spout death like a flame thrower. Let's say the driver and his helper were roasted alive, while they were making delivery. Who-

ever was at the receiving end could hardly call in a doctor. So he dumped the bodies, then the truck itself."

"And the chemical, too?"

"That's something we can't answer yet. Maybe it's already on its way. But the whole timing indicates that the receiver was his own forwarding agent—and that he worked near this hospital. I'd say we've an excellent chance to flush him from cover—if we can scare him first."

Martin Ash got to his feet. "Thank you, gentlemen. I can understand my part clearly now."

"Then you'll go on pretending that fellow upstairs may talk at any moment?"

Ash went to the window of his office, and stared out at the hospital esplanade with eyes that refused to focus. The federal man was right, of course—he had little choice. The enemy (and it hardly mattered if he was nameless, so far) must be outfought and outwitted, on every front.

"We'll go along with you," he said slowly.

Saunders held out his hand. "Thank you, Doctor. It takes courage to make this kind of decision."

"You'll be here, too, remember."

"Danger is our business. It isn't yours."

"What if there's a panic before the event?"

Both Hurlbut and Saunders smiled wearily. "You'd be surprised how well people can live under the shadow of their own doom," said the federal man. "Everyone in New York will read that columnist's scarehead. Naturally, they'll hang on their radios and jam all the bars for the next telecast. But I don't foresee any panic—not until there's something real to panic over. . . ."

"I must alert my staff, of course."

"Naturally. I'll see to it that neighbor hospitals are ready to help—if you need help later." Saunders got briskly to his feet, with the air of a man who has just had a weight shifted from his shoulders. "I'll be in touch through Hurlbut's office."

Ash continued to stand in his window after the visitors had gone. He must alert the staff—simply as a prudent routine. We'll be ready, he thought, if this man-made lightning strikes in our area.

And then he remembered that Catherine would be driving out to their summer place on Long Island tomorrow—a whole world's remove from this unsolved mystery. She had invited a houseful of guests for the week-end and she expected—in fact, took it for granted—that he would accompany her.

Rationalizing for a moment, he told himself there really was no crying need of his presence here, even if disaster struck: in fact, he would do well to delegate all real decisions to Andy Gray, whose wartime experience far transcended his own. Emergency services at East Side General were as well organized as a boat drill on an Atlantic liner; thanks to Andy, they could go into gear at a moment's notice, without the slightest hitch. No one would censure Dr. Martin Ash for taking his regular week-end off at this time. But he knew that any emergency would find him at his post.

EN ROUTE to the surgical ward and morning bed check, Tony Korff ducked into a diet kitchen and poured himself a cup of coffee, hot and black. He drank it down in swift gulps as he stood in the open door to the fire escape. Far below him, New York shimmered in the haze. Another scorcher, he thought absently. He had not slept a wink since he had assisted at the operation that had saved Bert Rilling's life; even now, he was half afraid to verify the discovery he had made under the operating-room lights.

A second cup and a few pieces of toast filched from a nurse's tray were all the breakfast he needed. He was ready to take the plunge now—to risk everything on the conviction that Bert Rilling and he were anything but strangers.

The nurse at the bedside was already on her feet, offering him

the chart, as Tony closed the door of the sick man's room carefully behind him. He put on his professional manner, studying the record even as one hand darted under the flap of the oxygen tent to measure the brewer's pulse.

He forced himself to concentrate on details, and kept his eyes away from the patient's dim profile, half-glimpsed through the plastic wall of the tent. The pulse beat was irregular and hurried—that meant auricular fibrillation, a sure sign of the gradual breakdown of the heart itself. The chart showed that leg circulation still held up, thanks to Andy's daring surgery—but this was only a partial victory. A diseased heart had propelled those clots into the blood stream in the first place. That same heart was gradually losing its function now. Almost surely, it would kill the brewer sooner or later.

You can't die until I'm sure of you, thought Tony Korff. Damn you, I won't *let* you die. . . . He came back, with a start, to what the nurse was saying.

"Will you examine those spots on his fingers, Doctor? I noticed them just now when I came on duty. The night special says they were even more visible when he came back from the O.R."

Tony lifted the beefy hand. Only three fingers were involved, but the spots were clearly visible. "Localized emboli, nothing more," he said. "These cases always shoot a volley of small clots into the system. One must have blocked the artery to the finger ends. Circulation out there isn't too good anyway—" Instinctively, he let his hand close on Rilling's, to test the skin tone. The brewer moaned, through the fog of opiates, and jerked back his hand: "*Mein Gott!*"

Tony felt his heart leap wildly. The guttural fury in the brewer's voice cut across the years. A scene unfolded in his mind, like a crazy film run backward. A slimy alley, deep in East Berlin. His own face, twisted in fear and rage, as he stood with his back to the wall and fought with the courage of desperation to throw aside the hands that strove to drag him to the miry curb. Then

the explosion of two beefy fists, scattering the gang to right and left. The broad-shouldered bully (bigger and angrier than the thugs who had cornered him), saving Korff's skin in a matter of seconds, as he sent the whole gang scurrying for cover. . . .

*"Mein Gott! Was ist das hier?"*

Tony Korff knitted the fingers of both his hands to stop their trembling. "Give me that flashlight, nurse," he said quietly. "I want to check his color."

There was no sound in the room but the whine of the motor outside the oxygen tent. The beam of the flash cut through the plastic wall. Forehead and jowls were a bluish hue, mute advertisement of a failing heart. A silhouette out of my past, thought Tony. He's dying, and I mustn't let him die. . . . And then, as though answering the unspoken thought, Bert Rilling opened his eyes. For a moment, the sleepy gaze seemed to light with recognition as he focused on the intent, dark profile just outside the window of the tent.

Tony held his breath until the brewer subsided into coma again. He was sure now—so sure that he scarcely dared draw breath. *Kurt Schilling*, he thought. Only you're Bert Rilling now. After all, it was an easy change to make when you crossed the Atlantic. Even when we first met, I knew that you'd not be content to rule a Berlin slum forever. That you'd smell out Hitler's sickness and change sides in time . . . From that chance encounter in the alley (when Kurt had taken him under his wing and trained him to become a kind of minor henchman) he had feared and respected Schilling, in equal measure—and obeyed his orders without question.

When he heard that Schilling had vanished into the great mill-race of America, he had borne no ill will toward his protector. He had expected nothing from Schilling—beyond the fact that the two-fisted bully would use him so long as he was of value. Besides, Tony Korff had already been planning his own escape from Germany. . . .

Kurt Schilling had used him once. Now Bert Rilling, the millionaire businessman turned politician, must find use for him again. After all, Rilling had no choice—providing he lived long enough to understand that Tony Korff was a threat to his new position. That Tony had every right to demand some provision for his future, in return for keeping his mouth shut about the past.

He turned again to the chart. Auricular fibrillation meant quinidine, of course. Sometimes, the drug could perform a miracle—and Tony Korff was badly in need of a miracle this morning. He picked up the phone on Rilling's bed table and dialed the office number of Dr. George Plant.

"How's your star boarder this morning, Korff?"

"Still viable, sir," he said crisply. "The skin tone is excellent below the waist. There's no sign of a fresh complication. But the pulse is something else again. I'd diagnose an auricular fibrillation in the making—" He grinned at the suddenly silent receiver, then nodded briskly, as Plant gave the order he was hoping for. "Quinidine? I'll order it right away, Doctor."

Back at the oxygen tent after he had called pharmacy, he knew that he could not linger. Now that the drug was ordered, he could do no more than wait—and pray. The nurse was at his elbow. "Is there anything I can do, Doctor—?"

"Make sure he gets that quinidine the moment it arrives. And call me immediately, if there's the slightest change. . . ."

In the hall, obeying an impulse, he turned down the corridor that led to the detention room where the burn patient lay. As an annex to the surgical ward, this, too, was part of his bailiwick.

He saw at a glance that the man was *in extremis* now. The nurse at the bedside (she was one of his ward girls, who took orders without question) greeted him with evident relief. "I'm so glad you're here, Doctor. I was about to ask for a stimulant order."

His eye noted the covered tray at the bedside. Probably the poor devil was beyond stimulation now—but he'd be criticized later if he didn't make the attempt.



"I'll shoot in an ampule of coramine," he said. "Do you have a syringe?"

While the nurse was passing the instrument, he picked up the ampule from the tray, then discarded it in favor of one marked metrazol, a far more powerful stimulant. Drawing the contents into the syringe, he snapped an elastic tourniquet in place on the dying man's arm, twisting it hard to bring up a vein already turgid with failing circulation. He watched his thumb depress the needle, transferring the drug to the blood stream. I can keep my hands at work for East Side General, he thought. My brain belongs to Tony Korff this morning — and to Korff's future.

"We're almost out of oxygen, Doctor," said the nurse. "Could you watch him while I order another tank?"

Tony nodded absently. "Is the law still outside?"

"Not any longer, Doctor. They must have given up hope that he'd ever talk again."

The nurse had hurried out. Tony continued to study the moribund burn victim; his eye noted that the color had improved a bit, around those mummylike bandages; the pulse under his finger had grown stronger, as the potent stimulant jolted at brain centers depressed by shock. Abruptly, the half-hidden face muscles twitched, as though the man were about to speak.

This time, Tony siphoned two full ampules of metrazol into the syringe. If the fellow was going to talk, it must be now or never: since he must die in all events, it would do no harm to jolt him once more, as he stood with one foot across the border. The needle sank home, plunging until the contents of the syringe had started toward the fast-fading brain. Only then did Tony lift his eyes, to make sure the nurse had not returned before he pocketed the empty ampules and moved closer to the bed.

It'll need a moment more, he thought — hearing the girl's step at last. He took the oxygen tank from her hands, even as he was barking an order for an adrenalin needle. When the door had sighed shut a second time, he knew that he, and he alone, would

hear the message that would issue from those blistered lips. . . . The police would be grateful to anyone who took down that dying statement. It did no harm to have the police on your side, when you were about to purchase a practice in a city like New York.

The face muscles were beginning to twitch violently under the sterile bandage packs. Tony watched the legs go into spasm — like giant jackknives twisted in the confining sheet. Only a doctor would know that this was the convulsion that preceded death — an automatic response to those extra shots of metrazol.

A groan escaped the puffed lips. A groan, and a single word. Tony, with one ear against the bandaged cheek, heard it clearly.

"Silver —"

"Go on, *Dummkopf!*" Tony all but shouted, hoping that the sound would reach the damaged brain.

"Silver — Silver Cap —"

Tony, scowling down at the feebly jerking body, felt the pulse flutter one more time, and then taper into silence. A strange immobility that was shattered by the death rattle that burst from collapsing lungs.

The nurse was in the doorway before he could step back from the bedside. Obeying another instinct, he whirled toward her with outstretched hand.

"Give me that adrenalin — quickly!"

The chest bandages ripped under his hand. Now that he had begun this dramatic fight for life, he must play his part to the end — if only for the record.

Thanks to the adrenalin needle, he could keep that record straight. No one need know of those extra ampules of metrazol in his pocket. When he made his report later, he would say merely that he had dared to inject adrenalin direct.

He plunged the needle twice before he was sure he had reached the heart cavity. Actually, of course, this new injection would have been useless, even were the patient still living.

"Was I too late, Doctor?"

"Stand back—I'm not sure—"

He dropped the needle in the tray and took up an already lifeless pulse. His mind was free now, racing around the reflex he had just witnessed, the final gasp from the threshold of death. *Silver Cap*. . . Silver Cap Beer and Ale was the brew that had brought Bert Rilling his fortune, his political power. Fantastic as it might seem, there must be some connection between the friend of his youth—and this charred lump.

His eyes were on the ripped bandages, on the segment of burned flesh he had just exposed to plunge the needle. There was something familiar about that gray-white eschar. In a flash he knew that the spots on Rilling's fingers and the burn scars he was observing now had been caused by the same agent. In that burst of perception, the whole picture came clear.

Bert Rilling had somehow come in contact with the chemical which had burned two men—killing one and eventually the other. No one but Tony Korff—who knew the Berlin thug of yesterday—could picture that chain of events more graphically. It was Rilling—or his agents—who had dumped those bodies on the platform of the warehouse. Somewhere along the route, Rilling had come in contact with the chemical that had caused their deaths.

Tony followed the mechanical routine of listening to the burned man's heart—and, hearing nothing, pronounced him dead. "Bring me the death certificate later; I'm behind schedule now."

He was free of the cadaver now. Quite logically, he had already decided that his information was his personal asset. He did not dream of sharing it with anyone—least of all, with the police. Free to roam the hospital a moment more before the treadmill claimed him, he rounded a corner—and collided with a fellow-intern deep in a newspaper. As he mumbled his apologies, Tony had just time to glimpse the headline on a syndicated column his colleague was reading:

## ATOMIC KILLER RUMORED AT LARGE IN MANHATTAN

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### Hospital Guards One Victim And Waits for Others

It took an instant for the words to make a pattern. And then, Tony Korff began to laugh. He could not believe that crazy splash of ink was justified.

As always, there must be a simpler explanation below the surface. In the meantime, he could afford to laugh in earnest, as he pictured the vast police dragnet spread over the city, and the strange haul it would dredge from the depths. He thought, with brief contempt, of the cordon of bluecoats that still ringed the hospital—determined, even now, to keep the killer from reaching his dying victim, unaware that the menace had already canceled out.

Bert must tell him everything when he emerged from his narcotic coma; if Bert was reluctant to speak, there were ways of forcing him. Tony's head was high as he entered the surgical ward—and his white-clad legs almost seemed to strut. The world was his oyster this morning. He could afford to extract the pearl in his own way, at his own time.

AT THAT moment (a full city block distant, though they were under the same roof) Bert Rilling's mind was wrestling with realities, in a cloud of pain and opiates. His eyes, small-pupiled from the narcotic, adjusted themselves to his shuttered hospital room. He was too tired to let his mind wander far afield. For the present, he preferred to concentrate on that hospital room.

It had seemed somehow natural to come out of his coma and find Tony's face within a few inches of his own. Even the flashlight and the sharp-nosed stare were part of the gutter rat he remembered. He knew, too, that even in the old days Tony had

always wanted to be a doctor; that later he had found his way to a German university, and then had escaped the general collapse of Europe before it was too late. Since Kurt Schilling had become Bert Rilling, he had made it his business to check on Anton Korff's progress, and had been well aware that Tony was interning at the hospital across from the brewery. But he had been at some pains to make sure their paths did not cross. Rilling had known from the start that time would only whet Tony's appetites. Remembering the young hoodlum he had befriended long ago, he might only discover a full-grown jackal, eager for his lifeblood. . . . Now, though, when he was quite sure that Tony had recognized him, he was not afraid. For the moment, he had the queer, fatalistic feeling that this meeting had been ordained long ago.

Certainly, he had no fear that Tony would betray him. He had left Kurt Schilling behind in East Berlin, for good and all. Tony would be the first to understand that—to protect his secret, at a price. Bert Rilling was sure that the price would be high, but Tony would be worth the cost. In fact, as he began to weigh things in earnest, it seemed clear that he could no longer do without Tony Korff.

What had happened last night at the brewery could have happened to anyone forced to depend upon others than himself. Normally, Rilling would not have been present to check the delivery of that innocent-looking sack to his office. Over the years, he had found it simpler to delegate a certain authority, even a certain elementary trust. Yet last night he had lingered after hours in his office, in his shirt sleeves, because he was at home there.

He remembered that he had scarcely troubled to glance outside, when he heard the truck rumble to a stop a few feet beyond his door. After all, the stuff had been arriving from Tennessee for months now without a hitch—in each case, buried deep in a load of tight-packed bags of hops. No one would guess that in one of those bags was a small, lead-cased bottle containing a

chemical that was, quite literally, worth its weight in diamonds.

He would never have known exactly what happened if he had not strolled out to the platform to superintend the unloading. He was just in time to see the vital hop sack slip through the sweat-grimed hands of the driver's helper, a new man, as he lifted it from truck to platform.

Then, in a split second, two things had happened. First, the gunny sack split, releasing a prodigal cascade of hops. He had had a momentary glimpse of the bottle, a squat lead rectangle, as it rolled free to crack its seal against the iron studding of the tailboard. The flash had come at that precise instant—a blinding, prismatic flare which seared away the lives of both driver and helper while he stood helpless on the platform. Only one thing had saved him from destruction, too—the lead jacket of the bottle had melted and run together, closing the mouth for a few precious moments. He had had time to scurry into the toolroom and don the asbestos suit that always hung in readiness there, in case a vat exploded. Time to clamp a wrench on the bottle, and hammer the molten lead across the mouth. His right hand still tingled faintly, as he recalled the pain in his fingertips when some particle of the deadly fluid had burned through his gloves.

Once the bottle was locked away in his office safe, he had dumped the incriminating evidence, the two charred bodies. The problem of disposal had been simple enough, thanks to the dark streets that fanned out from the brewery. Looking back on it now, he admitted the spot he had chosen was too close to the brewery. Had he known, at the time, how easily he was to abandon the truck, he would have sent car and cadavers alike into the same watery grave.

He had stripped off the asbestos suit, and sent it swirling toward the sea from the quay beside the brewery in the suction of the outgoing tide. Stumbling back through the brewery gates at last, he had ignored the first, lancing pains, while he fumbled his way to the loading platform to sweep away the last possible

scrap of evidence. He had hoped to reach his office desk in time to swallow one of the tablets he kept there always. But when he gained the office with his last hard-won breath, his leg muscles gave way completely and he sprawled full-length on the carpet. Using the full strength of his massive arms and shoulders, he had inched his way to the phone, dialed Plant's number, and gasped out a call for help before he tumbled into oblivion.

All in all, he thought, I've handled things well enough. He had always transferred contraband with the utmost care; an international operator couldn't be too careful these days, no matter how well he selected his subordinates. He had kept his name clean; the very men who had lost their lives on his loading platform were paid off a thousand miles away.

The system had paid off handsomely in the past. Yet he knew only too well that it took only one bad blunder on his part—one rendezvous missed, or vital shipment delayed—to dry up the income that was his life and blood nowadays. Rilling's clients abroad, who spent millions to siphon American secrets into their own arsenals, would surely replace him, if he failed them tonight.

Bert Rilling felt his spine curl as he faced up to the complete blueprint of his dilemma. The *Baltic Prince* was his present contact. A freighter out of Oslo, with ports of call that did not appear on the innocent bills of lading; Captain Falk commanding. His drug-numbed brain echoed the name. If Falk sailed without that lead-covered bottle tonight, Rilling's smuggling empire would crumble.

Of course, there was still Tony Korff. He had trusted Tony in the past. From his present vantage point, it seemed that he would be forced to trust Tony once more. Later, when his head had cleared in earnest, they must have a long visit, for old time's sake. Bert Rilling closed his eyes, and dismissed from his mind any threat that Tony Korff might pose.

## CHAPTER 6



ANDY GRAY opened a cautious eye and glared resentfully at the alarm clock at his bedside. Nine sharp—he was already on his feet and ready for another day. An ice-cold shower drummed new life into his blood stream. Then once over lightly with the razor—and he decided to do without a haircut another week. As usual, his freshly laundered whites resisted him like armor. He shrugged his shoulders to open the starched sleeves, and performed a deep knee bend to unlimber the trousers. He went through these rituals like a man in a not-too-unpleasant dream. At any time now he would wake up completely—and face the fact that he was in love with one woman, and all-but-branded by another. It was bad enough when a man desired one woman with all his heart and soul. When he wanted two of them—for entirely different reasons—decision could be hell on earth.

He stood quietly in his room while he assembled the tools of his trade: his stethoscope and clip book, the morning report that one of the orderlies had left on his night table. He had one hand on the doorknob, the model resident about to step on the hospital treadmill, when he noticed the envelope on the carpet for the first time: a squarish, expensive envelope, with his name slashed across the front in a hand he recognized instantly.

The note was short and to the point—like Pat herself:

Darling:

I think we understand each other quite well—don't you? Anyhow, I've had my rest cure, and I hope you've decided you deserve yours.

My night nurse will leave this at your door. Just to tell you that I'll have checked out when you read it. I'll be at the Plaza most



of the day. Certainly after five, when I'd adore to pour you a cocktail and hear your plans.

The note was unsigned—and that, too, was quite in character. For all its polite phrasing, it was a command. Pat's cards are on the table, he thought. She's daring me to show mine and learn who's the loser.

He did not believe for a moment that she had left the hospital. Pat seldom rose before noon, even on the last lap of a pretended rest cure. Besides, he was sure that she would wait for Dr. Plant's morning visit, if only for the sake of appearances. Weighing her note between his hands, he toyed with the impulse to go straight to her room and decided that this was probably exactly what she expected him to do, in final proof of her victory.

He tore the note into small pieces, and flung them into the first wastebasket as he went through the orderly room. There, just outside of the entrance to the surgical ward, was the familiar glass door of the diet kitchen where he had played a part so carefully with Julia, only a few hours ago. Yielding to another impulse, he pushed his way in. Jackie, the crippled heart case, was on the books for 9:30 sharp. He would need coffee, at least, before he faced that ordeal.

He was sipping his second steaming cup when Julia Talbot came into the kitchen carrying two eggs—and offered him a good morning, as tranquilly as though they had known each other forever. If she remembers that kiss last night, he thought, she's taking the memory in her stride. If she's admitting the fact that I'm labeled for delivery to Pat Reed, her defenses are in perfect order.

"One of these was for Vicki Ryan," she said, as she broke both eggs into a pan. "But I'm afraid we both overslept this morning, and Vicki's had to run. Won't you join me?"

"Vicki's loss is my gain," said Andy—and he was pleased by his own steadiness. "But you've no right to be up so early."

"I'm scrubbing for the crippled heart," said Julia. "Emily Sloane's request, no less. All the regulars are busy this morning, it seems —"

"That's no reason to drag you on duty —"

"Emily knows I love it," said the dark girl serenely. "Of course, if you'd rather shop around for someone else. . . ."

"You know there's no one I'd rather have."

"Then we're back where we started, aren't we?"

"Back to last night, you mean?"

He watched her color, ever so slightly, as she salted the eggs. "Sunny side up, Andy?"

"Please—if it's not a play on words."

"You've every right to be sunny this morning," said Julia. "You're marrying the tenth richest girl in America, and buying your own hospital day after tomorrow. At least, that was the note on which we parted —"

"So it was. And you're going down to Florida to be Timmie's district nurse?"

"Have you any objections?"

When he did not answer, she bent above the skillet and devoted her whole attention to their breakfast. Andy noted, with a perverse pleasure, that the spots of color at her cheek were crimson now.

He did not speak again until she had set out the two platters of eggs and toast on the sideboard. Then he said, "Would you like me to write Timmie a letter of introduction?"

"I'd rather introduce myself," said Julia. "After all, I'm sure that Dr. Ash will give me an endorsement."

"Of course you aren't really serious."

He watched her take a letter from one starched pocket. "I wrote this to your brother last night before I turned in," she said. "Would you like to read it?"

"On the contrary. All that matters is you haven't mailed it, so far."

"But I shall, Andy. Even if I can't take you with me."

"Why, Julia — why? I've told you the life isn't for you —"

"And suppose I insisted that what you said about your brother was an inspiration?"

He devoted himself to his breakfast. Have the last word if you must, he told her silently. I'm old enough to know it's useless to combat idealism in the young. . . . Once again, he was sure that his refusal to argue had put her on the defensive. So sure, in fact, that he held his tongue until the last morsel of food was gone.

"We've time for a smoke before we start on Jackie." He lighted her cigarette and then his own — and held out his cup for still more coffee. "You've no right to do this, you know. It isn't fair to either of us."

"Tell me more, Andy —"

"I can give you a real hand up in New York. And you must know by this time that I'll never be able to operate without this sort of breakfast —"

"That's no way to insult your fiancée —"

"I doubt if Pat can boil water. You must never send that letter. I won't let you throw your talents away."

The nurse spoke with her back turned: "You've guessed a great deal about me, Andy. May I risk one guess about you?"

"I wouldn't. It might boomerang. . . ."

"You haven't asked her yet, have you? Not really?"

Of course I haven't, he thought, with a flash of annoyance. It was Pat who asked me to marry her. In fact, she's been the aggressor from the start. Aloud, he said only, "Our engagement is official, Julia. Whenever she cares to announce it."

"Then I'll send this letter to Timmie, the day I read the story on the society page."

Julia turned from the sink and dried her hands on a towel. He watched the movement of her hands — admiring their precision with a part of his mind that had no connection with this near-quarrel. Only a surgical nurse could do so much with so few lost

motions, he thought. Only a woman you love could come fresh from dishwater and make your heart turn over.

"Is that a challenge, Julia—or a bargain?"

"Call it both," she said. "Until I read it in the papers, I'll insist you still belong to us—to Timmie and me. Never to her. And don't tell me I've misplaced my faith again—I won't listen." She moved quickly toward the door. "I must scrub for your operation—if you still want me."

I'll always want you, he told her wordlessly—letting her leave the field with her own small triumph. It was a relief to sit here quietly and alone—the last quiet moment he would know until his working day ended.

Ten minutes later, when he entered the anesthetic room, next to the theater where he would begin today's work, he was as calm as an acolyte. The science of medicine, he reflected, was a blessed escape for all those who could not make up their minds.

JACKIE was still sleeping under the preoperative medication. Andy reviewed the case swiftly, feeling his mind mesh into gear, as smoothly as his surgical team was massing to back his assault on life's very citadel. Operations on the heart were easy to overdramatize: that tough and beautifully articulated mechanism was often stronger than the truant body it served. It was not his small patient's fault that something had gone awry, months before his birth, perhaps at the very moment of his creation.

Science, for all its wizardry, had yet to explain why Jackie's life cycle had failed to follow the normal graph, set down by numberless centuries of human evolution. It was a miracle that had given man a heart of four chambers, two auricles and two thick-walled ventricles, the right side receiving from the veins the blood from which the oxygen has been expended—the left side receiving fresh blood from the lungs, to send it pulsing down the arteries to every body cell. Somehow Jackie had been denied this miracle.

For a reason that medicine was still unable to explain, this simple division of the vital pump had not been accomplished. The artery from the right side of the heart leading to the lungs was constricted, until only a thin stream of blood could be pumped through to them. During his short span on earth, Jackie's activities had been cruelly limited. Unable to play at will, or even to exercise moderately without consuming his pitifully short supply of oxygen, he had existed so far in a kind of limbo, neither living nor dead.

Until recently there had been no hope for children like Jackie: few heart cripples could hope to exist beyond the playpen stage, and these, too, were pathetic prey for every disease from which the young must suffer. Now an operation had been devised to solve the problem—a daring, almost virtuoso feat of surgery. When successful, it shunted blood around the constricted lung artery, into the oxygen-rich bed of the lung capillaries themselves, where the vital supply could be restored.

Extended bed rest, and a build-up diet, had done wonders for Jackie during his sojourn at East Side General. Today, he was as ready for surgery as he would ever be.

In the dressing room, Andy slipped into a one-piece coverall that is the surgeon's battle dress and looked into the scrub room. Julia, already busy at the side table, said in her uninflected, professional voice, "One of the students is sick this morning, Dr. Gray. I'm afraid we're a little shorthanded: we may not be ready by the time you finish scrubbing."

"I'll get ready just the same," he said. He picked up a brush at the sink, just as the loudspeaker uttered his name. Andy cursed adequately behind his mask as he picked up the phone.

"You haven't started, Andy?" It was Tony Korff. "Can you come down to emergency? I have a crushed chest here. From that new highway construction job. A crane went berserk—he's probably a goner, but I want you to certify it."

That was quite like Tony—and Andy damned him in turn as

he sped for the elevator. Usually, the intern considered himself self-sufficient—unless a sixth sense warned him that his patient was probably beyond all hope.

In the corridor, he just escaped a head-on collision with Emily Sloane. Even in this preoccupied moment, he could not help noticing that the supervisor's face was drawn—a clinical picture of pain ignored, he thought. I must check up on Emily. Working by the clock for too many years, these O.R. specials can drive themselves to the brink before their time. He stepped into the elevator, frowning. He must call Emily to his office this afternoon. . . .

An hour and a half later, with Tony Korff's patient resting as well as could be expected after an emergency lobectomy, Andy Gray was peeling off his gloves in the scrub room when Julia Talbot came in.

"Are you still planning to do Jackie this morning, Doctor?" she asked.

"I think not, Miss Talbot," he answered just as formally. "The team should be rested for a tough one like that. Suppose we try to take him in the late afternoon, when we've all caught our breath."

On her way out, the nurse stood aside to make way for Martin Ash. The older surgeon looked tired and worn, thought Andy.

"I heard you'd be doing the heart case, Andy. Too bad you got sidetracked."

Andy grinned above the sting of the antiseptic. "This one was worth saving, too."

"You did a fine job—but that goes without saying."

"Thank you, sir. Will you expect me at the noon conference?"

Martin Ash leaned against the doorjamb and fumbled for a cigarette. Andy studied him guardedly as the expensive platinum lighter flared. Rumpled though he was from a hard morning in the clinic, Ash seemed vibrantly alive. I've never seen a handsomer face, thought Andy. Or a sadder one.

"We'll meet as usual," said Ash. "Not that I've a great deal to report: I'm sure the grapevine has done my work in advance. . . ."

"I've been too busy to listen."

"You heard that the second burn victim died, of course."

"It was confidential on the morning report." He watched Ash remove the cigarette from his lips, wondering why the older man's whole body should relax so abruptly as he expelled a cloud of tobacco smoke.

"The police asked me to give them that fellow as a decoy," said Ash slowly. "Heaven knows why, but they believed they could frighten their quarry out of hiding—if we pretended he was about to name names. . . ."

"I see."

"Do you see what might have happened if the plan had worked?"

Andy grinned. "I've been under fire in other languages. I'll admit it's a novelty in one's own country, but—"

"The fire has eased a trifle," said Ash abruptly.

"I'm afraid I don't follow."

"Hurlbut phoned me this morning. I've already released the news of the second death to the afternoon papers."

"Did he tell you why?"

"A directive from higher up. Someone in Washington got skitish when he saw the morning news from New York. It seems we mustn't offend a former ally—even if he is our undeclared nemesis today. . . ."

"I still don't follow."

"It's simple enough, Andy. At this moment, we mustn't say that our enemies are shipping radioactive chemicals abroad—with help on this side. We mustn't even infer that one of those enemies might blow up a metropolitan hospital, rather than let his identity be revealed."

"So we inform him, via the public prints, that he can stop worrying?"

"Precisely. We say he's in no danger whatever, so far as *we* are concerned. Which, of course, is nothing less than the truth. I still wish that burn case had spoken up before he died."

"Does Hurlbut think he has an outside chance to corner his man?"

"He still insists the job was done in this neighborhood. He even believes that he'll make an arrest by tomorrow morning." Ash sighed again. "We've both interned in this district, Andy. And we both know that's what a policeman always says — when he's at the end of his rope."

"Will you tell the conference this much, Doctor, or is it *entre nous*?"

"I don't think I can do less. I haven't had time to check the hospital's temperature. Have you noticed any sign of nerves?"

Andy met his superior's eyes. "Most of us have been under fire, sir — in odd corners of the world. I'd say that those who haven't are ready for baptism."

"We're still on emergency, you understand. Even if we're no longer a direct target . . ."

"We're ready now, sir. Blood bank and O.R. dispersals and all the rest, ready to function instantly. I can answer for that."

Ash dropped a hand on the younger man's shoulder. "You're a comfort, as usual," he said. "I wish I had your staying power."

"Call it habit," said Andy. "I've never been noted for my courage. Or say I fell into the right job. That's even simpler. When I'm working, I don't notice the world outside. . . ."

"Speaking of work, when will you take that heart case?"

"Not before five."

"Five will do nicely," said Martin Ash. "If I can, I'll be in the gallery."

The operating theater was empty when Andy crossed it, en route to the next demanding chore of a day that now seemed endless. He had hoped that Julia would linger — but that, too, was only wishful thinking. Julia had outlined the path she would



follow. Whether he would join her on that journey was for him to decide, and him alone.

It was only when he turned into the surgical ward that he remembered his five-o'clock date with Pat Reed. Tentative though it was, he knew, just as surely, that she would not wait forever. A girl like Pat had playmates everywhere: in New York, she had only to lift a phone to summon them by the dozens. . . . And yet, he had posted Jackie for that same hour; he could hardly change the time again, after telling Ash.

He wondered if he had chosen the hour instinctively, if only to put off his decision a little longer.

EMERGING from the noon conference in the director's office, Dr. Dale Easton waited in the corridor for Andy Gray to follow.

"Lunch, Andy?"

"I'm afraid not, Dale. I've a 'pendectomy in the clinic in 15 minutes."

"How do they feed you? Intravenously, while you're operating?"

Andy chuckled as they fell into step together—turning down the stairs to Pathology, as though by common consent. "It's an idea, now you mention it. Did you have something to show me?"

They entered the laboratory by the side door. The pathologist took a slide from his drying rack and fitted it methodically under the microscope that stood by the window.

"Burn tissue, I take it," said Andy.

"A bit I didn't send out to the pathology lab at Brookhaven."

Dale watched carefully as his friend fitted one eye to the lens. The pattern of the slide was already etched on his own brain—so accurately that he could have sketched the damaged tissue without a second glance. When Andy raised his eyes they did not speak at once. The pathologist replaced the slide on the rack—and perched on his high work stool. He permitted himself the ghost of a grin as he voiced the thought they were sharing.

"As you've seen, it's a chemical burn of some kind. It isn't the result of an atomic blast—though it does have a surface resemblance."

"Enough to fool me last night," said Andy. "I'm sure it fooled Tony—and our friends on Civil Defense."

"It's harder to fool a microscope," said Dale. "As you've seen, the eschar is formidable. But there's none of the gangrenelike breakdown they had at Hiroshima—the peculiar aftermath of atomic radiation. Granted, there's a degree of radiation present: the Geiger counter shows that clearly. . . ."

"Can you name the chemical, Dale?"

The pathologist shook his head. "Brookhaven can, I imagine," he said. "Naturally, they aren't talking out there."

"Would you say this chemical could be an ingredient of an atomic bomb—past or future?"

"Hasn't Brookhaven said just that—by saying nothing? Our time clock may still be ticking around the corner. It may still strike—even though we've eased the enemy's mind by admitting both burn victims are gone."

"Death is always ticking around the corner," said Andy. "We must still be prepared until we've pinned it down." He paced the length of the autopsy room, and banged a fist on the dissection table. "And I'm not just talking of this threat to New York. Even if Pandora's box is open—there must be some way to clamp down the lid."

Dale Easton kept his rueful grin intact. "World government with teeth might do the trick. Plus a genuine return to God."

"Who'll lead the way? Congress—or the Federated Churches of America?"

"You're rather bitter today, Andy."

"Far from it. I'm just startled by this switch of credo. I always thought you were a fatalist. Now it seems you're a Christian."

"I believe man is immortal, at least," said the pathologist. He jerked a thumb toward the open door of the autopsy room, where

the body of the second burn victim, shrouded in white, awaited his attention. "Including that bit of debris—and never mind the sort of life he led. Man must lose his soul to find it—and I'll name the author of that philosophy, if your religion's a bit rusty."

"I can quote Scripture as well as the next," said Andy—and Dale wondered why his voice had suddenly grown almost testy. "But has it stopped our playmates across the Atlantic from stockpiling for death? Will it stop *our* masterminds from dumping a load—if there's no simpler way out?"

"You *are* bitter, my friend," said the pathologist. "Can it mean you've decided to marry that uptown bank, after all?"

Andy Gray moved back from the microscope. "Go climb a tree, will you? I've decided nothing."

"Then you're writhing in limbo—which is far worse. Just as we're all counting our pulses here—and getting religion pronto, before we vanish in a puff of smoke."

"Put it that way, if you must," said Andy gloomily. "The fact remains, I can't keep up this pace forever. Maybe I'd even welcome a quick dissolution. . . ."

"You won't reach out in the meantime and take a pinch of faith?"

"Thanks, Dale. You don't take faith like snuff."

"I happen to think you have always had religion."

"Haven't you heard that all doctors are atheists—especially lab doctors?"

Again, Dale Easton glanced at the motionless shape in the autopsy room. "I believe in a force outside myself. The force that permits me to think, and invented love, and sparked that poor lump of clay under the winding sheet. So, Dr. Gray, do you. If you didn't, you'd never have scheduled that heart surgery for five o'clock this afternoon."

"Come again, please?"

"You're officially off duty at five—with a good week of overtime you've every right to use. Outside the hospital, mind you—

having fun, making time with your heiress. Instead, you throw in your lot with the rest of us. Shall I tell you why?"

"How can you — when I don't know myself?"

"Of course you know. You're staying here tonight because you have faith."

"Go climb a tree, will you?"

"You said that once," said Dale mildly.

"It bears repeating," said Andy — and stalked out of the lab. Dale Easton grinned — and let the door slam without comment.

## CHAPTER 7



DAMNING the prosy routine of the wards that had pinned him to his job all morning long, Tony Korff strode through the great brass doors of East Side General and ran rather than walked toward the bus station outside the main gate. He was free of responsibility now, until five. There was little enough time for what he had to do.

"Looking for a lift, Doctor?"

He pulled back to the curb and his eyes met Pat Reed's, smiling invitingly at him from her chauffeur-driven town car. Though he had flirted with her mildly during her stay at Schuyler Tower, Tony had known that this streamlined siren was on the trail of Andy Gray, and, wise in the ways of the sex, he had known better than to interfere.

"If you're going uptown," he said formally — and offered her his most stylized bow. He was glad that his chalk-stripe blue suit (borrowed from a fellow intern's locker without his knowledge) was a perfect fit, that the pale-blue foulard tie he was wearing was a genuine Charvet. I could pass for Park Avenue at this moment, he thought — and settled in the seat beside the girl with a smile that was both friendly and entirely professional.

"Where can I drop you, Dr. Korff?"

"The Chronicle Building will do," he said casually—and wished, for a fleeting moment, that the ride could be longer. So far, he had not quite dared to look at her direct—the replica in the mirror above the chauffeur's head was exciting enough.

"Is it pleasant to be cured?" he asked.

"I wasn't really ill. You must have known that."

"Rest cures have their points, too," he said—and watched her face carefully in the mirror. But Pat Reed had already leaned forward as the car coasted to a stop at the gatehouse. A policeman stepped out briefly, nodded at the sight of Tony Korff, and waved them on.

"What was the meaning of that?"

"Apparently there's a killer on the loose in the neighborhood," he said—and smiled at his own humor. "They thought he might be hiding under your lap robe. When they recognized me, they gave up the idea."

"Then there's an advantage in being escorted home by a physician."

"It's unfortunate I can't go all the way," he said. There was a quality in her laughter that encouraged him to face her directly at last.

"Just how far *can* you go, Doctor?"

"I've an errand in midtown, then I must hurry back." He had made his voice dry and deliberate—withdrawing in the hope she would follow. That was a tactic that had brought results before, in many languages.

"And here I was, thinking you were off for the day. Doesn't an intern have any rights at all?"

"No rights at all in business hours."

"When are you really off duty?"

His mind was racing, but he forced it to throttle down. Either she's fought with Andy, he concluded, or she's out to teach him a lesson. And I've blundered into the picture, at the moment she needs an extra man. Just as I blundered on the burn case.

"Two evenings and a full afternoon each week," he said. "Would you like the dates?"

Their eyes met and locked. "I know the dates," she said.

He felt her sudden, animal magnetism—but his voice was still clipped and hard. Throw down the challenge if you must, he told her wordlessly. You'll find me a different antagonist from Andy Gray.

"May I ask why the sudden interest in my welfare?"

"I'm a woman alone in the world," she said. Even as his pulses hammered, he could not help admiring the parody of innocence in her downcast eyes. "A renovated widow, if you insist, who loves to give parties. I can always use bachelors on their evening off."

"Singular or plural?" he asked.

"Singular—if they're agreeable."

"I'd be only too happy to prove myself," he said—and bent forward to light her cigarette.

She settled back in her corner of the limousine. "This Tuesday I'm having a few people in for cocktails—at my suite in the Plaza. If you'd care to join us . . ."

"Will Andy Gray be there?"

"I haven't the slightest idea."

He gave her no time to be startled, and still less to protest, as he bent to kiss her hand. "I think you've told me all I've a right to hear," he said quietly. "Don't you agree?"

"Quite," she said. "Here's your destination."

The limousine whisked into the midtown traffic before he could speak again, leaving him nothing but the memory of that mocking smile. His brain still spun as he turned into the old-fashioned marble lobby of the newspaper building. Once he had stepped into an elevator and asked for the city room, he felt his brain clear magically. Pat Reed might be useful later: he was after larger game today.

When he reached his floor and made inquiries, an office boy led

him to a hallway that opened to the file room—the newspaper morgue. Glancing about him, Tony noted that the wilderness of steel filing cabinets abutted directly on the city room itself—a deserted beehive at this hour, save for a few rewrite men pounding routine stories. He had not counted on this proximity, for he wished to come and go unobserved while he carried through this special job of research. Yet he had no other source, with the time at his disposal. The *Chronicle* was world-famous for its complete coverage: here, if anywhere, he would have the essential facts at his finger ends.

"I'm Dr. Korff from East Side General," he told the attendant who emerged, molelike, from the shadows of the filing cases and barred his path. He displayed his credentials with a flourish. "I'm here to check on a case I'm reporting. May I see all you have on Bert Rilling, the brewer?"

"I think his clips are in use. Someone was doing a story on his illness this morning."

Tony felt his heart sink. "I'm the attending physician and this is important. Will you try to dig them up for me?"

The man turned with a shrug—then brightened visibly as his eye lit on a wire basket on his worktable, heaped high with fat manila folders. "You're in luck, Doctor—they've just been returned from the city desk. Make yourself comfortable and take all the notes you want. Just so long as you don't take out any clippings . . ."

Tony sat down with the file on Bert Rilling, and tried to keep his hands from trembling. Pretending to make busy notes while he felt the morgue-keeper's eyes upon him, he saw that his former mentor was an important American indeed—if one could judge importance by the volume of a man's personal publicity.

The folders made it evident at once that Rilling-Schilling had lost no time in pushing his way to prominence after his departure from Hitler's shadow. The first important entry told of his election to a German-American society whose motto seemed to be

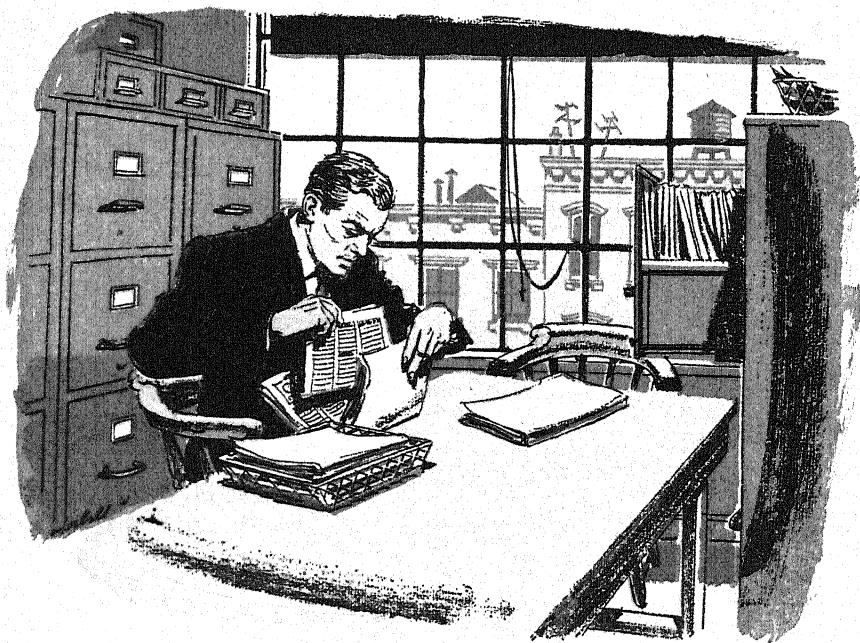
patriotism-plus. Already, Tony gathered, Bert had purchased a major interest in the Silver Cap Brewery. No one, apparently, had speculated on the source of Rilling's wealth. That it was Nazi money, Tony had no doubt. Even in those remote days, the big-wigs were placing their loot with care—insuring their continued financial status, no matter how the next war might go. Thanks to Bert Rilling's enterprise, the old brewery had risen from the doldrums, and pushed its product into competition with the best American brands.

The clippings showed a definite change in the career of Bert Rilling as his adopted country rumbled down the road to World War II. Headline after headline celebrated his crusading leadership on war-bond drives, especially among Americans of German descent. Long before Pearl Harbor, he had invested heavily in the manufacture of airplane parts; he had even figured in a much-publicized operation whereby anti-Nazi German technicians had been smuggled out of Europe.

The halo of the good citizen was balanced firmly above the *émigré's* bullet skull when the war ended. Tony's thin-lipped sneer broadened as he read of his old friend's rise to political power: that, too, was part of the pattern, part of the slow accretion of wealth and influence that Rilling now accepted as his due. Early in '51 there had even been a faint breath of scandal when a rampaging Congressional committee, investigating the drug traffic in metropolitan New York, had proved that three of the brewer's protégés were leaders of the ring. Rilling himself had been exonerated, of course, when the three were branded as Communist agents.

Rilling's pious acceptance of his whitewash, and his appearance with the Mayor in Central Park Mall as one of the principal speakers in New York's annual I-Am-An-American Day were the last entries in the final, dated folder. A supplementary folder, stamped "current," contained Pete Collins' by-line story of the brewer's collapse and the daring surgery that had saved his life.





Stapled to this folder was a long galley proof, with a numbered slug marked "obit." Tony could still smell the acrid odor of printer's ink; he guessed that the obituary had been set in type this morning, ready for instant use in event of the brewer's death.

For Tony the picture was now complete. One thing was certain: though Kurt had changed his name and his citizenship, he had kept his European connections intact. The story of the drug ring was all the off-stage color that Tony needed. He knew, from the letters he occasionally received, that a part of the Nazi movement had gone underground in Germany, while it waited for a change in the political wind. Some of the moving spirits had merely crossed the line to work for the Russians—as Bert himself would surely have done, had he been trapped in Berlin.

Deep in thought, Tony returned the wire basket of clippings to the custodian's desk. It was self-evident that Rilling must renew their alliance. Once they had sealed that bargain, it would be Tony

Korff who led. He had always known that his mind was far keener than Kurt's could ever be. It was high time he put that knowledge to the proof.

Now that he had made his decision, he was eager to reach the hospital again with the least delay. He skirted the reporters' desks, aware that a few more typewriters were chattering now, in the great, dim cave of the city room — aware, with a sickening burst of rage, that someone had called his name. He pulled up sharply, a dozen strides from the elevator and freedom — and found himself facing Pete Collins.

"Isn't this a bit far north for you, Doc?" The reporter was affable enough — but Tony, who had felt Pete's gimlet glance before, braced himself instinctively.

"What about *you*, Collins? I thought you were still at the hospital."

"So I was, until an hour ago. Matter of fact, I followed you down the steps. I saw you get in a lady's limousine, and whisk away in style. Now I find you digging in *our* morgue, for a change. What gives?"

Tony did not hesitate for a fraction. "I was looking up a file on an old patient," he said. "Part of a case report."

Pete's eyebrows lifted. "I never knew you fellows went to such lengths with your history-taking. What's wrong with the hospital records?"

Korff matched the reporter's smile perfectly. "Nothing. They're just a bit dry at times. And even interns like a change of air. Can I buy you a drink?"

"Believe it or not, I never drink while I'm working."

"Then you'll excuse me if I run? I should be at the hospital now. This isn't my afternoon off —" Tony felt the reporter's eyes follow him to the elevator.

"East Side General, and hurry. I'm a doctor on emergency," Tony told the cab driver, and settled back in the seat. His agile brain meshed firmly with the problem at hand. Above all, he must

not seem eager from this point on. When he faced Rilling again, he must pretend that collaboration was inevitable. And yet, try as he might, he could not loosen his tight-clenched fists, or stop the pump of blood at his temples. He came back with difficulty to what the driver was saying.

"Any news of the killer down your way, Doc?"

Today of all days, thought Tony Korff, I deserve a deaf mute at the wheel. He resisted the impulse to order the oaf to hold his tongue. Once again, he remembered that he had every need to be inconspicuous.

"What kind of a killer?"

"Didn't you see the papers? Fellow's supposed to be loose on the East Side with a blockbuster in his satchel. An A-bomb, no less. Me, I think it's a lot of hokum to take the people's minds off the mistakes the government's makin' —"

"It could be," said Tony sagely, but his thoughts were on something else. . . . The urge to reach Bert Rilling's bedside was almost more than he could bear.

PETE COLLINS turned away from the window of his city room and scratched the stubble of beard he always wore for luck when a story was in the making. Though he seemed friendly enough on the surface, Tony Korff was a cold fish beneath: Pete had sensed as much from their first meeting. A queer, too-wise fish, accustomed to navigate in murky waters.

Pete had watched the refugee bolt from the *Chronicle* lobby and leap into a taxi. Tony (as Pete knew all too well) was far too poor to afford a taxi. Also, he was reasonably sure that the intern was free until five. Why should he hurry back to the hospital — and why, of all places, should he be rummaging in the *Chronicle* morgue?

Remembering Pat Reed's limousine, and the confident way Korff had settled beside that long-legged charmer, Pete wondered if the intern was about to promote a bit of blackmail. . . . Obey-

ing an instinct, he turned back among the stacks of the file room, and glanced at the visitor's book. There was Korff's bold signature — and beside it, in the morgue-keeper's neat script, the name of Bert Rilling, brewer.

Pete frowned, and shouted down the dim aisle of filing cabinets: "Hey Joe! Will you dig out Rilling's clips for me?"

"Looking right at you, Pete," said the custodian. "In that wire basket."

Pete settled at the worktable, and opened the first bulging folder. His mind was alert now, probing any possible connection between Tony Korff and the millionaire brewer. Like Rilling, Korff was a German-Balt; both of them had left Germany not too long ago. What old memories was the younger refugee bringing up to date in this dusty corner?

The reporter continued to turn over the neatly stapled bunches of clippings, while a tantalizing pattern began to form in his brain. A plot with a solid beginning and no discernible climax. Rilling had come from Germany almost 20 years ago — ostensibly, a well-heeled emigrant who had disavowed Hitler and all his works. Yet his welcome in the German-American section of New York had been waiting. His rise to power thereafter had been meteoric. Too meteoric, when measured by ordinary yardsticks — unless there was real money behind him. Here was an interview Pete himself had written, at the height of Rilling's wartime fame. Pete had given the devil his due and written a straightaway news story. For all his porcine exterior, Rilling, on the face of it, was a sterling citizen of his adopted land. But Pete had refused to like Bert Rilling. There was something behind those cold eyes — something a mere news report could never hope to define.

He closed the file on Bert Rilling and stared down at the basket of clippings without seeing it at all. Something had brought Tony Korff to the file to refresh his memory. A shared past, in Germany, when both Korff and Rilling were planning their escape? Or did Tony's visit to the *Chronicle* have a more immediate mo-

tivation? It was fantastic, of course—too fantastic to be true. There was no provable connection between Korff's strange visit to the file room, Bert Rilling's collapse at the brewery, and the scarehead story that had mushroomed out of those burn cases. And yet, the whole thing could be just fantastic enough to be true.

Dr. George Plant had admitted to Pete Collins (off the record, of course) that Rilling's chance of survival was slim. That left Tony Korff as the key—and whatever information Tony might be withholding at the moment.

It was an off-chance, as always—but such chances had paid dividends before. Pete dialed Inspector Hurlbut's private number. If Hurlbut picks up the phone, he told himself, I'll play it straight. If he's out, I'll skip the whole business—and chalk it up as another brain storm. The Inspector's voice snarled at the far end of the connection, and Pete felt his heart leap.

"Collins talking, Inspector. Can we make a deal?"

"I doubt it." Hurlbut, he perceived, was in a bad mood.

"I won't say I have your boy on ice. But I can give you a lead. . . ."

"Talk—I'm listening."

"I mentioned a deal—remember?"

"Have I ever let you down?"

"Frequently. I want this one on the line."

"Go on," said Hurlbut. "I'm still listening—not too carefully."

"You want a lead—I can tell by that rasp in your voice. And I want a story—"

"Are you playing this ad lib, Pete, or do you have something solid?"

"Buy my idea, and give me a half hour's start if it pays off. That's all I ask."

"Talk," said Hurlbut. Pete, who knew that martinet-bark from his cub-reporter days, cleared his throat, and responded seriously. Even with his strange detachment, he could almost hear the Inspector's brain click into action, as he gave a terse but graphic

account of his meeting with Tony Korff in the corridors of the *Chronicle*.

"Is that all, Collins?"

"Quite all. Aren't you buying?"

"Maybe you should go back to your comic books?"

"Maybe—but will you put a tail on Korff just the same?"

"If I do, I'll let you know."

Pete Collins smiled as he hung up the receiver. He sighed, loosed his belt over his bulging midriff, and began to type painfully. A feature story, based on the recent exposé of corruption in high places. A story as old as the first parliament, and as new as tomorrow's gang killing. A story he would abandon in a twinkling if his hunch on Korff should pay off as he hoped.

## CHAPTER 8



ANDY GRAY leaned back in the swivel chair and lifted both feet to the corner of his desk. The cubicle that served as his office had never seemed more peaceful. Andy felt his eyelids droop, and knew he would be sleeping in another moment, if he dared relax in earnest.

There was no reason for this unheard-of pause in the midst of a busy day. Martin Ash (who seemed to have a passion for work this afternoon) had taken on the splenectomy Andy had originally scheduled at 4:30. Incredibly, he had nothing to occupy his time until Jackie's heart—which had now been moved up to 6:30, because of congestion in Surgery. He glanced at his watch and realized he had two solid hours to himself. Time to call Pat Reed, if he liked, and transpose that cocktail date into a supper *à deux*. Time to review his whole life pattern, and banish Pat forever.

Perhaps if he dozed these two hours away, when he awakened he might find that his subconscious mind (where duty and desire so often fight a drawn battle) had resolved his problem once and

for all. His eyelids drooped, just as someone tapped on the door. Andy's feet hit the floor with a guilty start: he had forgotten his appointment with Emily Sloane at 4:30. He had even forgotten the sudden stab of foreboding when she had asked for this meeting after he'd finished his lobectomy this morning.

"Come in, Miss Sloane!" To his own ears, the voice sounded casually hearty—but he felt its falseness as the door opened slowly and Emily stood on the threshold.

"Well, Emily—what seems to be the matter?" She's almost too immaculate, he thought—too wise and withdrawn from our worldly cares. Without speaking, she came forward and laid a card on his desk.

He saw at a glance that it was one of the standard forms from pathology. "Sandra Smith, Surgical Outpatient Department," he read aloud. The notation was in Dale Easton's hand. "Smears studied with Papanicolaou technique show definitely malignant cells. Suggest immediate examination and treatment."

Emily spoke at last, and her cool, detached voice matched her manner. "I know this is routine, Dr. Gray. I'm sorry to bother you—"

He tossed the card on the desk. "Can't you call me Andy, after all these years? And who is Sandra Smith?"

"I am."

Andy knew then just why he had stared so intently at Emily that morning. His surgeon's instinct had registered its premonition. Here, too soon for comfort, was the proof.

"Say that again, Emily."

"I took those smears myself and slipped them into a batch going to lab. The report came back this morning."

He put on his professional mask—knowing that it would not deceive Emily for a moment. "Come into the consulting room, won't you? There may be some mistake about this."

She preceded him to the door—then paused, as hospital usage demanded, so that the doctor might enter before the supervisor.

"I want you to examine me, Doctor. But there's no mistake."

Ten minutes later, he was forced to agree with her completely. He saw now that the malignant growth which had invaded the pelvis was far advanced — an evil beyond medical aid. There was no real need of a biopsy. He took one nonetheless, if only to delay the inevitable. He could diagnose the tissue under direct vision. There, as he had expected, was the characteristic wild cell-growth, obeying none of the bodily laws that kept tissue intact.

Back in his office, Emily Sloane sat down quietly in the consultant's chair, and he was struck by the compassion in her eyes. She's sorry for *me* at this moment, he thought — she knows, all too well, that there can be no subterfuge between us now. Yet his first words were an automatic evasion — the instinctive effort any doctor would make.

"We won't have a report on that biopsy for several days, Emily. Suppose I call you when I hear from pathology?"

"You don't need it to make a diagnosis, I'm sure."

For the last time, he marveled at her calm. When he forced himself to speak again, his voice broke, for all his care. "We always take a biopsy to check ourselves. . . ."

"Tell me the truth, Andy." It was the first time she had used his Christian name. For one dreadful moment, her thin hand darted across the desk blotter and covered his own. Then she sat back resolutely, and folded both hands in her lap. "I came to you because I knew you would. It's carcinoma, isn't it?"

"It's carcinoma, Emily." Most doctors argued that one should never tell a patient of a hopeless condition. What could he do for a patient who had signed her death warrant in advance?

"And it's too far advanced to be cured. I know that, too."

"It's far advanced, I'm afraid. But not necessarily hopeless. Radiation can do wonders with these cases."

"Palliative radiation." For the first time, she sounded bitter. "That's what you'd give me, isn't it? When you know it can't possibly help —"



"We can't just quit, Emily."

"Why can't we — when the time comes?" She got up quickly as she spoke, and offered him the ghost of a smile. "I'm sorry, Doctor — you've been very kind."

He reached for a memorandum. "Let me give you a note to Roentgen Therapy. They can start treatment at once."

She waited while he wrote out the note and ripped it from his daybook.

"Thank you, Doctor. Thank you for everything."

Andy opened his mouth to speak but no words came. After she had gone, he stared at the door she had closed so quietly behind her. This was a time when a man felt utterly helpless, when he regretted that he'd ever set out to be a doctor. He struck his fist hard on the desk blotter and sprang up as he realized that he had not offered Emily a single word of comfort. On the threshold of his office he pulled up sharply. Emily had come to him for facts, not for human warmth.

EMILY SLOANE leaned against the door of her room in the operating suite and waited for her heart to resume its normal beat. It had been a close thing, there in the floor supervisor's office just outside the surgical ward. Vicki Ryan, returning from checking the ward with Dr. Korff, had come in just as Emily was snapping shut the padlock on the narcotic cabinet but she had seemed satisfied with Emily's comment that she had stopped in to pick up some aspirin for a raging headache.

Emily's fingers relaxed their grip on the vial in her uniform pocket. Three grains of morphine, from the ward medicine cabinet: it would have been impossible to explain that theft to anyone. . . . Even now, when it was no longer necessary to explain, she could feel her face crimson as she recalled her long series of thefts. Of course, this was the first time she had robbed the narcotic room of three full grains.

She lifted the tube from her pocket — a slender container just

large enough to hold the tiny white tablets—and studied it for a moment before she placed it on the table beside her bed. The syringe was locked in the drawer of her dresser; she opened the drawer with the key she always carried and placed the instrument on the table, along with the kit that general practitioners used to prepare hypodermics in the home—a rack with a metal spoon, and a small alcohol lamp to sterilize the needle. Emily made these moves automatically. It was not the first time the syringe and its needle had served her. The many small scars on her thighs were mute evidence of her long, losing battle against pain.

Now that she was prepared, she could afford to be deliberate. Methodically, she sterilized the needle and prepared the injection. It was a routine she had repeated oftener than she could remember, as she had eased the suffering of a generation of patients. Emily Sloane had never bungled a hypo in her life—she did not mean to bungle this one.

When the syringe was filled, she rolled her sleeve shoulder-high, and sponged the skin in the curve of her elbow joint. The vein stood out cruelly, for she had been losing weight steadily all this last long year.

She took a rubber tourniquet from her night-table drawer and wrapped it tightly around her upper arm. Then she made the injection—directly into the vein itself. Instinctively obeying the discipline of 20 years' training, she quickly washed out both barrel and needle and replaced them carefully in their case.

The skin of her arm was an angry blue-red now, as the blood backed against the tourniquet. Some of the circulation was seeping into the capillaries, even now—she recognized the languor, a sweet preview of what was to come . . . But there was no time to waste if her plan was to be carried through. Her bed was waiting, she saw—the covers drawn back with geometric precision, the single pillow plumped and waiting. For all her iron will, she staggered just a little as she moved toward it at last.

The familiar half-coma had reached her muscles now. She could

hardly summon the will power to release the tourniquet. There was a final jab of pain as the blood, dammed in the veins and suddenly freed, surged through in its journey toward her heart.

Lying at ease on her pillow, she could trace that inexorable flow. Time seemed to have no end while she waited for the beat of her heart that would carry the blood with its burden of narcotic to the brain itself. Never had she felt more at peace. She had dwelt in this nirvana before and lived to regret the aftermaths. It was a comfort to know that aftermaths were behind her.

For a moment, as the full impact of three grains of morphine smote her brain, Emily Sloane clutched at the dregs of consciousness. Then she felt the room, the hospital, the world blend and fade. The measureless instant held its own ultimate meaning. It was both the beginning and the end of wisdom.

For a while longer, the body on the neat hospital bed continued to breathe, with a rhythm that grew steadily fainter. Then the breathing ceased. The heart, preserving an inherent rhythm of its own, continued its function for a little time — even when the delicate controls of the brain were silenced forever. Then it, too, slowed and stopped.

DESCENDING the bright green slope of her seaward-facing terrace, Catherine Ash drew her terry-cloth robe about the two wisps of silk that served as her bathing costume. It was actually cool, here on the shore of Long Island; the city seemed unreal as a half-remembered mirage. This, after all, was the corner of her universe she liked best — the home of her youth, where Martin Ash had courted her, and where she had ruled as queen for more years than she cared to remember.

As usual, she saw that her week-end party was a smooth-running success. The shouts from the tennis court told her that, as well as the laughter of the hardier swimmers who cavorted in the heavy surf that pounded on her private beach. But the routine triumph was empty without Martin's presence.

She hugged her dressing gown even closer as she hesitated on the top step of the terrace—not because of the fresh offshore breeze, but from a sudden feeling of loneliness and need. It was absurd, of course, but she wanted the reassurance of Martin's voice. Somehow, she missed him most of all at this perfect hour in late afternoon, when sea and sky were a haze of bluish gold, and the air above her lawn was a warring symphony of gulls. Why, when all this beauty was his for the asking, did he cling to that slum-girdled hospital?

Ignoring a shouted invitation from the surf, Catherine turned back to the house. Her fingers trembled as she picked up the telephone in the library and gave Martin's private number at the hospital. Her nerves were taut, and it seemed a long time before her call broke through the circuits to New York.

The phone began to ring at last in the shuttered office of the director of East Side General—even at this distance, it seemed to resound against empty silence. Had he been pretending when he said that his presence at the hospital was essential?

Of course, she was a fool to neglect her guests for this fruitless call. Even if he answered, he would refuse to join her. Far back in her brain, she heard the echo of her father's words years ago, before she and Martin were married.

"Every doctor's wife feels neglected, Catherine. I suppose you're prepared for that?"

"I'm prepared for anything. Nothing matters now but Martin—and Martin's success."

"A noble sentiment, my dear. It does you great credit. Has it occurred to you that your suitor might do with a bit more rope—and a good deal less nobility?"

"You needn't be cynical, Father—"

"Cynicism is the name young people give to common sense. I've told you before you love him more than he loves you. That means you'll never be done pestering him. Coming between him and his work. Calling him when he wants to be alone—"

The ghostly dialogue died in her memory, as the telephone bell beat against her ear. Her mind ranged over the immediate past, testing each moment they had shared together. What telltale signs had she overlooked in her complacency? She could not deny that they had quarreled more often of late, especially over moving the hospital uptown. . . .

The phone was ringing furiously now, as though the operator shared her impatience. Where were his secretaries, even though his own private office was empty?

Then she recalled that this was the tag end of a Saturday afternoon—and that the stenographers would have left the outer office long ago. Only Martin remained—driving himself at tasks a hundred hands could have performed as well as he.

Perhaps he had been too casual when he told her about the mysterious burn cases and discounted the newspaper talk of an atomic killer. Perhaps he was actually more worried than he cared to admit.

But no matter what threat might hang over the hospital tonight, it was wrong that they should be apart. When she hung up at last, she stood staring at the book-lined wall—wondering if she could bring herself to ring the hospital direct and force the switchboard operator to track her husband down. But she decided against that intrusion.

When she walked out to her terrace again, the voices of her guests seemed to come from far away, like echoes in a dream. "I say, Mrs. Ash—aren't you coming in for a dip?"

She looked up gratefully at the laughing young man who stood on the last broad step that led from lawn to the beach. Forcing a laugh, she tossed aside her beach robe and ran down to take his extended hand. She was glad that her honey-brown tan more than matched his own, that her figure was lithe as any girl's on the beach. Yet as she plunged into the sun-shot foam, she could not quite put from her mind the unanswered ringing of the telephone.

MARTIN ASH climbed the tenement stairs. He climbed them slowly, without quite facing the impulse that had brought him here. When a man is crowding 50, he thought, he finds it difficult to face up to his childhood needs—the instinctive search for reassurance that has been the heritage of every child since Adam. Now, as he turned the knob of his father's door, he hesitated for a moment on the threshold. When he opened the door a cautious crack, he saw that the tiny living room was darkened as always—illuminated only by the green arc of the radio dial. There was his father, crouched against the machine, with the same prayer shawl about his shoulders. It was too late for withdrawal now—Martin Aschoff senior had already turned toward the whisper of the opening door.

"Come in, son. I thought you were on Long Island—"

"Catherine went out to join her guests, Papa. I was detained at the hospital."

"Yes, Martin. When I heard the news, I hoped you would stay."

"What news, Father?"

The old man touched the radio gently—a movement that was both caress and reproof. "Most often, this magic box gives me back my dreams. Sometimes, it speaks of reality as well—and I feel it is only fair to listen. I know the threat you are facing across the street, Martin. Did you come to tell me more?"

"There's no more to tell, Papa."

"Did you come to reassure us, then? Did you think we would be afraid?"

"Of course not." I came to renew myself, thought Martin; but you know that as well as I. Aloud, he said only, "Where is Mama?"

"Mrs. Hefner from next door is bringing back her daughter's baby. From a nursing home in the Bronx. Mama went to help her. She will be back about nine o'clock."

"Then it's well I came. I'll call the hospital and have them send over a supper tray."

Martin Aschoff senior lifted his eyes in mild reproof. "You should know your mama better, Martin. When has she left me without my supper? There are sandwiches and beer in the ice-box."

The head of East Side General dropped into his usual armchair and lit a cigarette. Now that he was here, he felt no need to explain why he had come.

"Will you go to Catherine tonight, son?"

"I don't think so. Not until this business is really behind us. She has more than 20 guests—she won't be lonesome."

"I still say that Catherine needs you, Martin. Remember, you have your work when loneliness comes. Your wife has nothing but you—and her hopes for you—"

"Catherine has her friends, and more interests than she can name. . . ."

"Look at those friends closely—and those interests. You will find they are only pastimes, while she waits for your return." Martin Aschoff spread his hands above the glow of the radio dial, as though he could warm them in the flood of music that poured into the room. "Remember the words of Nietzsche—'*Man says "I will," woman says "he will."*' It is the wisdom that all wives learn with time."

"I'm with her almost constantly, Papa." The younger Martin, puzzled by this oblique attack, watched his father warily through the smoke of his cigarette. "It isn't my fault I can't be with her now."

"It is quite impossible, then, that you go to Long Island tonight?"

"How can I leave the hospital with this threat still hanging over us all?"

"You are right, of course. But rightness does not make Catherine less lonely."

"A man can share just so much, Papa."

"And yet, a man must share everything with his wife to make

a true marriage. It is a dilemma no man can solve completely."

"What would you have me do?"

"Share your work with her, Martin. Share your hopes and fears. Not just your love. There are other things in marriage besides love."

*Share my work*, thought Martin. That's easy enough to say, from your high plane of serenity. . . . And then, he remembered how often he had looked up into the observers' gallery at the clinic, while he was finishing a difficult operation, and found Catherine's intent face among the students. How often she had sat quietly at his side as he shouted his disappointments, or gloried in his triumphs. It was true that there were vast areas of his past she would never understand fully—just as she would never grasp his desire to keep the hospital here, where it belonged. Yet her failures did not come from lack of trying.

Had he tried half as hard to span the gulf that sunders men from women—to touch her hand in comfort, however briefly?

Father and son fell silent, as the dying chords of Handel's *Messiah* filled the room. Martin Ash did not stir for a long time. When he got to his feet at last, he bent above his father's chair and kissed the old man on the forehead.

"Thank you, Papa. I think I can go on now."

He never remembered weaving his way among the pushcarts outside the tenement stoop. As he pushed open the door of his office—the empty, week-end office that had been so lonely an hour ago—he thought for an instant that he caught the echo of a telephone bell. Crossing to his desk with its stacks of unanswered mail, he knew he should call Long Island—if only to see how Catherine was faring. But he was deep in his work, almost before he could switch on his desk lamp. Besides, it was the dinner hour, and Catherine would be fully occupied as the hostess of 20 glittering guests. She would hardly understand the peace he had discovered in that shabby tenement, at his father's side.



## CHAPTER 9



HE reflected sunset still glowed on the East River outside the drawn blinds of Bert Rilling's room as Tony Korff paused at the crack of the hall door. Bracing his shoulders, he walked in briskly — the model intern, completing his day's rounds, a little impatient over the last private patient whose report was not yet complete. The afternoon special, idling over a novel by the window as her patient continued to doze, rose instantly and put down her book.

"How's our patient doing?"

"He's had a wonderful day, Dr. Korff. I'm sure he's on the mend."

"The last hypo should have worn off by now. I think I'll examine him."

As he spoke, the bullet-bald head inside the isinglass window turned slowly on the pillow and the brewer's eyes opened slowly. The skin stretched tight across that gleaming skull was now a healthy pink. Even with that jumpy heart, thought Tony, you're too tough to die.

"If you please, nurse —" The voice was muffled, but clear enough. Rilling gestured lightly with his fingers, indicating that he wished the tent to be removed. The special glanced at Tony, who nodded benignly and said, "Raise his head a little, will you?"

He stood back from the bed while the nurse complied with his order. Then he tested the brewer's pulse. "You're looking wonderfully, sir. How are you feeling?"

"I'm not quite sure, Doctor. Rested, but weak —" Tony smiled, as he felt the hot probe of his old friend's eyes.

With the nurse's aid, he spun out his examination as long as he dared. Blood pressure and temperature, he noted, were both close to normal. The patient still complained of slight pain in his

legs but this, too, was to be expected. Andy Gray, it seemed, had done his usual masterly job. Tony folded the covers neatly into place again — and thanked his colleague from the bottom of his heart. Bert Rilling was ready for the grill now — as ready as he would ever be.

"Why don't you go out and have a smoke, Miss Lambert?" he said. "I've finished my wards now, so I've plenty of time to get Mr. Rilling's history. He wasn't in much shape for it last night, you know —"

"That's very kind of you, Doctor. I'll be in the solarium if you want me."

He closed the door carefully behind her. His heart was pounding as he turned back toward the bed. Rilling had not stirred from his pillow and his torpid lids all but masked his eyes. When he spoke his voice was casually friendly, as though they had parted only yesterday.

"You took a long time, Tony —"

"I wanted you to get used to me gradually, Kurt — or do you prefer Bert, these days?"

"I recognized you this morning, you know —"

"I hoped you would. You aren't too proud, then, to remember old friends?"

Tony had spoken in German, as naturally as the man on the bed. He moved forward and held out his hand. Knowing Rilling as he did, he could only admire the other's aplomb. The years between, and last night's brush with death, had scarcely touched that iron strength.

"I haven't forgotten," Rilling said. "In fact, I wondered when you'd turn up again. You were wise to leave the Party when you did, Tony."

"So were you. I can see you've gone a bit farther than I."

"Little good it's done me. Your future is before you. I've used up my life — or most of it. It's too bad we must meet like this. . . ."

Too bad for *you*, thought Tony. In the past, you've been the

user — and I, the tool you discarded at will. The roles are reversed today — and you're well aware of that reversal.

His lips curled in an involuntary sneer. "You had a close call — but we pulled you out of it."

"Did you take part in the operation?"

"I was Dr. Gray's assistant."

"I've heard great things of you, here at East Side General. Will you let me help you, when you're qualified?"

"I've never refused your help before, Bert."

Rilling smiled for the first time — a wolfish grin. "And now we are model Americans together, Tony?"

"Ready to help each other," said Tony. "I'd say that completes the picture, wouldn't you? There's only one thing I can't understand. If you admired my career so much, why didn't you get in touch with me sooner? One might almost think you'd been avoiding me —"

"So we are honest with one another now," said Rilling. "*I have* avoided you. Somehow, I felt you might not approve of me, now you have turned respectable. It is good to find I was mistaken."

It's coming faster than I dared hope, thought Tony.

"We might have gone far together, if we'd stayed in Berlin," said the brewer. "But that is nothing, when one measures his chances here. Will you set up your practice in New York?"

"That was my plan from the start."

"I have connections here, you know. Very good connections. You'll live to bless the day you found me, Tony —"

"Is that all you do? Make beer and the right connections?"

Tony had put the whiplash in his voice deliberately. He matched Rilling's grin now. From here on, we'll hit each other openly, without pulling a punch.

"Beer can make a man rich, Tony."

"Smuggling can make him richer," said the intern. "And the profits don't show on his tax return."

"Are you calling me a smuggler to my face?"

"I called you worse names in Berlin. Don't tell me you're getting soft."

"Try me, Tony." The brewer's lips were tight now. "Just don't try me too far."

"I'll go on guessing until you stop me. Just tell me how right I am. For a start, you brought your money out of Germany—and your address book. You've been shipping everything that could fly or float, from enemy aliens to heroin. You're a smooth operator, Bert. So smooth that you didn't slip once—until yesterday. . . ."

The brewer's lips had begun to show blue against his pallor. Wondering how this tirade had affected his patient's heart, Tony sampled the pulse by instinct, even as his voice purred on. "Right so far, eh? That old heap of a brewery across the way is only a blind—even if you do manage to show a profit on your books. A perfect blind for the sort of work you do after hours—"

Rilling broke in at last. "It's fortunate you can't prove a word of this, Tony."

"Old friends don't need proof, Bert. Not if they understand one another."

Tony paused, but the body on the hospital bed did not stir. When Rilling spoke at last, his voice was calm enough. "Go on—I am still attentive."

"Whatever you were handling last night, it was too hot for anyone but you to touch. And that was just as well, because something went wrong en route. I'm really guessing now, but I'd say it happened in the brewery—and that you're the only living witness—"

The pulse under his hand fluttered like a dying bird. If my finger were the antenna of a lie detector, thought Tony, I couldn't measure your panic more accurately. But he kept his voice mild. "Try to be calm, Bert," he said. "Remember, I'm your doctor as well as your friend. You know your heart kicked back on you last night. The job was left unfinished, wasn't it?"

"Put it so, if you like. It saves us time."

"Does that mean you need me?"

"Don't be too clever, Tony."

"But I'm eager to help you, Bert. How can you doubt that for a moment?"

"On your terms, *nicht?*" The brewer's accent seemed to grow thicker with each breath.

"Doctors must live, Bert, as well as brewers." Tony turned away from the bed. Now that he had made his point, he could feel his heart swell with triumph. But it was too soon to permit Bert Rilling to read the exultation in his eyes.

"Tell it your way, Bert. I'm tired of guessing."

He listened impassively while the brewer's tired voice labored on. He was sure that Rilling was telling the truth — or, at least, enough of the truth to serve his purpose now. The stuff was locked in the brewery safe, whatever it was. Delivery was due at midnight, aboard a freighter across the river. All he need do for Rilling was open that safe, extract a heavily sealed bottle, show a light in the doorway that faced the river and wait for the scrape of a boat hook on the quay just below. Captain Falk of the *Baltic Prince* would take care of everything thereafter.

"What's in the bottle, Bert?"

"It is better that you do not know."

"I suppose you're right, for now." Tony smiled at some secret of his own. "Won't Falk be surprised when you don't appear in person?"

"*Nein*. The freighter is already cleared by customs. She will leave with the tide. Falk will accept the delivery."

"And your business goes down-river with her, if you fail to make this delivery."

"By no means. But it is simpler for all concerned if these shipments leave on schedule."

"There is still time to send the captain a note. You must tell him that a man in a white surgeon's coat will be waiting with

the package — and that he is authorized to take the usual fee."

"I am far too weak to write, Tony."

"Let me write the note. You can still sign your name — and I'll have it delivered by messenger."

When the instructions to Captain Falk were down in black and white with Bert Rilling's name painfully scrawled across the bottom of the page, Tony asked, "What shall I do with his cash payment?"

"You can bring it here tomorrow." The brewer's voice seemed an echo beyond the tomb. "We can divide it down the middle — if that's agreeable."

"What's the usual fee?"

"Fifty thousand, for this brand of goods."

"You'd divide fifty thousand down the middle, Bert?"

"Why not — since I've no choice?"

No choice indeed, thought Tony. What happens tomorrow is something else again. You're protecting your contact abroad tonight — and damn the cost. Tomorrow it will be a simple matter to have me eliminated, as a threat to your future.

Part of Tony's mind was fastened on that birdlike pulse. Another part was measuring the power of fifty thousand tax-free dollars in the life of a doctor about to carve out a practice in the cliffs of Manhattan.

"The combination for your safe, Bert. Where is it?"

"In my brief case over there along with the keys. You — go in by the side door — between the nurses' home and that block of tenements — there will be no watchman tonight."

Tony picked up the bedside chart with a small flourish. He had learned all he needed to know.

"Things will look better in the morning, Bert. You won't regret trusting me."

"I'm sure of that. . . ."

"I see that Dr. Plant has prescribed a sedative. Would you like to drop off now — and wake up tomorrow with your job done?"

He did not quite wait for the brewer's reply; the syringe was already in his hand, masked by the towel on the night table, before his mind registered Bert's feeble nod. "Heparin," he said smoothly. "Just to guard against another clot. Not that we expect a recurrence, of course." Once again, he blessed the easy hospital routine that disguised the tremor in his fingers, as he tested the plunger of the syringe.

"Sure you want it now, Bert? You can wait for your own doctor, if you prefer."

"I want to sleep tonight. The sooner the better." The brewer's voice was only a hoarse whisper — the whining eagerness for the needle that every intern knows.

Tony's hands were still shaking as he lifted the syringe and drew the barrel full of air. Nobody knew just how large an air embolism was needed to kill — but 50 cc's should do the job nicely. He glanced quickly at the door. Rilling's afternoon special was well trained. She would hardly burst in without knocking. . . .

"The shot, Tony! Please, the shot — !"



So you're really suffering, thought Tony, letting his eyes trail down the purple silhouette of Rilling's face on the hospital pillow. He moved swiftly to the bed, his free hand already closed round the tourniquet.

"Make a fist, Bert. This won't take a moment."

The tourniquet went around the brewer's arm; Tony dropped the towel that had covered the huge syringe. As the point of the needle sank in, he wondered if Rilling had noticed that he had failed to swab the skin with alcohol. Germs would do the brewer no harm on the journey he would begin in a moment more.

For the first time, Tony thought, I'm both doctor and executioner. No one would dream of questioning the death certificate I'll be signing in the next half hour: a postoperative embolus, the one nemesis that medicine can never hope to conquer. Even Andy Gray will endorse my report, sight unseen.

"Is that morphine you're giving me, Tony?"

His hand soothed Rilling back to the pillow. "The best medicine in the world. A medicine that cures all diseases."

"It doesn't feel like a shot —"

"Why should it, my friend? It's only air."

"Air? But won't that —"

In one deft motion, Tony flicked the needle from the doomed man's flesh, dropped it on the night table and fastened both fists on Bert's shoulders, holding him hard against the pillows.

"It already has, Bert. Can't you tell?"

The brewer opened his bluish lips but no words came. Tony's fists were firm as two steel claws, pinioning the feebly writhing body to the bed. He watched the left arm jerk and go limp, sure evidence that the air was reaching the victim's brain.

"Good-bye, Kurt. Just remember what you'd have done to me tomorrow. . . ."

The body jerked one more time. Then Rilling lay still. Tony Korff stepped back from the bed, snatching the syringe as he moved. Rinsing it carefully, he covered it as before with the sterile



towel. The room was quiet as the tomb, and there was no sound from the hall outside. Tony breathed deep as he pressed the buzzer. Once more, he had gambled and won.

STAINED by a half century of smog, the window of the Greek's offered, at best, a dim view of the esplanade and the doors of East Side General. Julia Talbot sat at ease in the wall booth of the dingy restaurant that served the hospital staff in all hours, knowing that Andy would emerge from that tall white prison in time, telling herself once more that it scarcely mattered now if their first date outside the hospital would also be their last.

There was no need to read Timmie Gray's telegram, lying spread out before her on the table. She already knew the wire by heart—but she wanted it ready for Andy's eye, when he sat down beside her.

"Have you been waiting long?"

Now that he stood above the table at last, she looked up at him with startled eyes, as if a stranger had addressed her. Though she had seen him only a few hours before, he seemed older—and far more tired than she remembered.

"Won't you sit down for a moment, Andy?"

"If it's only a moment," he said—and his voice was as haggard as his manner. "Your note said it was urgent—"

"Urgent to me, at least," she said, forcing a smile.

"Why did you insist on meeting here?"

"I thought it was time we had a date outside. Will you forgive me if that's sentimental?"

She watched his hand pass over his eyes and linger there. "I'll forgive you anything, Julia," he said. "It's just that I've had a long day. It was a shock to lose Rilling, you know. Of course, I was afraid all along that an embolus would finish the job. So, for that matter, was Korff—"

Julia did not answer. She knew she should resent his indifference to her nearness, but it was enough to have him at her side.

"I hope *you* aren't too tired to do Jackie with me tonight," he said. "I've already excused Korff as my assistant. He seemed a bit under the weather. Dr. Easton is coming up from pathology to take his place—"

"You know I wouldn't miss Jackie for the world."

"You can have Miss Ryan to help, if you like," he said. "I've already put her on call, if we need her. . . ."

"Must we talk about the hospital now, Andy?"

"Habit dies hard," he said—and managed a grin of sorts. "I know I should apologize for keeping you waiting and ask why you summoned me so abruptly. But I'm sure you'll tell me in your own way."

"I can guess why you were late, Andy. You were talking to Pat Reed. Making a date for tonight, after Jackie's operation. But that's no concern of mine. I asked you to meet me because I wanted to say good-bye." Her voice trembled a little, but her eyes did not waver. "Somehow, I wanted to say it outside the hospital."

"So you're leaving nursing while there's time."

"Not nursing, Andy. Just East Side General." She handed him the telegram, and waited quietly while his eye ran over the words. "As you see, I didn't send that letter after all. This is a confirmation of a telephone talk I had with your brother in Florida. He told me to choose my own time of arrival. My resignation is on Dr. Ash's desk right now. Jackie will be the last scrub I'll do for you—"

"Unless I come to Florida, too?" His voice was heavy with sarcasm, and the violence of the interruption startled her. But he went on, gravely controlled. "You're right, of course, about Pat Reed. I did talk to her, and she did ask me to drop in on her later. But that isn't what delayed me. Emily Sloane was found dead in her room. I had to certify the death as suicide."

Julia stared at him blankly. Somehow, the news did not really startle her. It was almost as though she had guessed at Emily's unhappiness long ago.

"Don't you want me to tell you why she died, Julia? It was carcinoma first, of course — you must have had some inkling of that. But Emily was suffering from slow death in another form. Loneliness killed her, too. The sort of loneliness that only a busy woman knows, if she happens to be unwanted —"

"Why are you telling me this, Andy?"

"Isn't the moral obvious? Let Timmie find himself another Nightingale. Get out of nursing while you have your looks, and catch yourself a man. But, of course, you won't. In your way, you're just as mulish as I —"

"Just as mulish, Andy," she agreed. "You think I'm quite mad. I return the compliment with interest. I'm convinced you're killing yourself here in New York. Killing yourself deliberately because you can't conquer the itch to be another Martin Ash. In Florida, you could wake up some morning and discover you're alive —" Her voice broke at last, and she covered her face with her hands to hide the tears. "But, of course, that's too much to ask of any man. Especially when another woman's waiting to buy him everything."

He sat silent under her outburst. A few moments later she had regained control of herself. "Shall we get back to work?" she said.

They rose together and walked through the lunchroom, into the cloying heat of evening. Neither of them spoke as they crossed the esplanade and entered the long white shadow of the hospital.

*Night*

## CHAPTER 10



THE clock above the door of the operating suite in East Side General Hospital pointed to half past seven when Dr. Andrew Gray walked in at last. In the familiar tiled hallway that led to the theater itself, he paused a moment more. Now that the meeting with Julia was behind him, he had regained some measure of calm. After all, if she persisted in her resolve to leave the hospital, he was the last man to stop her.

In the tiny anteroom he had just quitted, Jackie's parents would wait with renewed assurance, thanks to the words he had just spoken. But this was no time to think of parents as people. Jackie himself was only a problem now — a stubborn enigma that would need all his skill. He walked resolutely into the operating room. Dale Easton was already scrubbing at the long basin.

"Sure this isn't too much for you, Dale?"

"On the contrary." The pathologist chuckled as he reached for a nailbrush. "I'll admit I'm as nervous as a junior nurse. But I'm an old enough bird to know it'll pass. Providing I get the proper briefing now."

"Surely you've seen enough of these cases in autopsy."

"Too many, Andy. The clinical picture is clear, of course: a block in the blood flow to the lungs, plus a defect in the partitions of the heart itself. You propose to create a connection between the lungs and the arterial system, via the pulmonary artery, so that the blood will be oxygenated at the normal rate. But what are the chances of saving the boy, really?"

"Better than 50-50 — and I'm not being immodest." Andy

could feel his nerves steady with each word he spoke. Already, I'm more machine than man, he thought. When I face Julia across the table, she'll be part of the machine, with no human emotion involved.

Dale Easton finished scrubbing, and began the meticulous technique of drying hands and arms. Vicki Ryan half-opened the scrub-room door and Andy smiled, "Give us two minutes, Miss Ryan — and we'll start prepping."

Vicki said, "Isn't Dr. Korff scrubbing for this one? I already have his gloves out."

"Tony's a bit under the weather. I think we can manage with Dr. Easton, don't you?"

Vicki raised her brows at this unfamiliar attempt at levity. "What size gloves does the doctor wear?"

"Seven and a half will do," said Dale.

Andy turned to his work in earnest as a probationer entered with his gown on her stiffly extended forearms. The priest's white robe, he thought: the sterile garb of the healer, shutting me away, for awhile, from the woes of mortal man.

Gowned and gloved at last, he walked into his domain with his hands folded in a towel. He saw at a glance that all was in readiness. Jackie lay on his back, with the right side of the chest slightly elevated and the whole operative field swabbed a bright carmine. The tiny intratracheal tube was in place, feeding its steady mixture of oxygen and cyclopropane into the lungs, along with a slight amount of ether. Jackie's breathing, Andy noted, was regular and quiet. As always, there was a bluish tinge at lips and ear lobes, due to the boy's faulty heart.

"Dr. Easton, will you attach the oximeter?"

Andy stood back while the pathologist fastened the precision instrument to Jackie's ear lobe before changing his gloves. The oximeter was another of those modern barometers that give a wealth of information to a surgeon during a long-drawn major operation. Constantly recording the color of the patient's blood,

it could sound a warning of its own; increasing redness indicated richer oxygen levels, decreasing redness a lowering of blood oxygen. In Jackie's case, the initial reading would be well below normal: Andy did not wait for it now.

"We're ready when you are, Doctor."

It was Julia who had spoken. As he moved to the table, Andy raised his eyes to the glass wall of the observation gallery. He had expected a crowd tonight, but he was unprepared for the multiple rows of faces hanging like disembodied moons above his floodlit universe. He dropped his eyes to his work and spoke for the microphone just over his head.

"We have already determined that the aorta lies in its normal position, on the left side—and, therefore, will make our incision at the right side of the chest, entering the pleural cavity through the second interspace if possible. . . ."

He heard his voice drone on, and hoped that his hand would be as steady when the steel made its first stroke. "As you will observe, we are using the Blalock technique—"

From the corner of one eye, he caught the wink of steel. Julia had already picked up the first scalpel and stood ready to slap it into his gloved hand.

"One ready, two ready, three ready, four ready—"

The wall clock hung on the stroke of eight. He turned to the anesthetist and received his nod before he spread his hand across the table, palm up. The scalpel slapped hard against his glove. The blade touched the square of carmine-tinted skin, hesitated a moment, then cut through in a smooth, sure stroke.

TONY KORFF paced his carpet for the hundredth time and forced himself not to glance at the clock on the dresser. His pulse had outraced that timepiece for the last hour; he knew that another eternity must pass before he dared to venture out.

When eight-thirty struck in Schuyler Tower, he would take up his medical bag and, following the corridor to the fire escape, he



would quit the hospital by the nurses' garden, to make sure that he was unobserved in the main halls. Once he was clear of the surgical wing, it would be easy enough to enter the maze of streets that bordered the hospital to the west. Even if the police cordon was still enforced, the black bag would be his passport.

In his mind's eye, he could pace out his progress from that point on. Straight down the tenement block that housed the Aschoffs. Turn sharp right, into the alley that cut back toward the brewery and the sweep of cobbles that gave to the landing platform. The entrance to Rilling's private office was just inside the brewery's outer door — deep in shadows, no matter what the hour.

Rilling had said there would be no watchman tonight. His fingers dropped to the pocket of his jacket to finger the key that would give him access to the office. The combination to the safe was in his pocket, too, but he did not need those figures now; the last turn of the tumblers was blazoned in his mind for all time. With an eight-thirty start, he could open the safe long before the stroke of nine. It was only a few steps across the brewery floor to the door that opened from the inside, direct to the quay. No one would notice his flashlight as it winked in the crack of that half-opened portal — no one, that is, but Captain Falk, waiting across the river.

Tony Korff lit another cigarette. Somehow, he told himself, I must find a way to pass this next half hour or go mad. I can't show my face in the hospital, now that I'm officially on the sick list. He let his mind dwell on what he could do with \$50,000.

Fifty thousand would buy him the practice he had yearned for since he had first set foot in New York. A maisonette office on Park Avenue, a receptionist-nurse handsome as a magazine cover, and a gilt-edge list of patients. With the skill he possessed, he knew success would be assured, once that long first step was achieved. In three years' time he could meet Martin Ash and Andy Gray on their own battlefield and fight them for patients.



Celebrities from two continents would be numbered among his intimates. His private phone list would include the great beauties of the world. When Pat Reed was in town, he would have a latchkey to her door. . . .

*Pat Reed.* His hand closed on the throat of his telephone, as he recalled the challenge she had offered him. The purr of her voice was just what he needed to ease his racing heart. He would call her now—and pray that she was home, alone. He would make a date with her for this very night—the moment this business at the brewery was ended, never mind the hour. With luck and a little audacity, he could beat Andy Gray at his own game.

ANDY GRAY, lifting his eyes for a second, saw Martin Ash enter the students' gallery. Unusual as it was for the director to join his own interns at the observers' post, Andy could not be sure if he was flattered. Martin Ash's moves, in the past month, had been too puzzling to chart.

He spoke for the microphone, ignoring the late arrival. "You can now see the exposure of the right-lung hilus and the great vessels. . . ."

The operation proceeded slowly, a touch-and-go technique, requiring the utmost in skill and concentration from the whole team. When Andy glanced up again at the gallery, he saw that Ash had vanished from the phalanx of students. For no reason he could name, he was relieved that his chief had come and gone so quickly.

Under the revelation of the lights, the whole chest cavity lay exposed at last—the lung and the complex network of vessels that embraced it. As his hands moved surely, his comments into the microphone continued. It crossed his mind that the words he spoke so glibly were little more than textbook patter. Admittedly, he was giving a too-simple summary of a difficult and delicate procedure—a master stroke of surgery that had needed years of study and research. And yet, this very operation was already sav-

ing hundreds of children from a special doom. So far, he had every reason to hope it would save Jackie, too.

His knife reached a critical point in its meticulous dissection and he felt the whole room hold its breath as he worked. Then the tension passed and a collective sigh of relief went round the table.

"It's one for the books," said Dale, in the barest of whispers.

The pathologist had summed up the thought in every mind. Above him, he could hear the stir in the gallery as tangible as actual applause would have been. Precision and knowledge had paid dividends so far. If the balance of the operation proceeded as smoothly, there could be no doubt about Jackie's cure.

"We'll rest for a moment," Andy said. "It'll give the circulation a chance to adjust itself to what we've done so far."

He tossed the scalpel on the tray and stepped back. He had been dreading this break from the beginning — this emergence from his battle to save a life, from the absolute concentration that had held his own life at arm's length.

At the head of the table, Dr. Evans had already stepped up the pressure of his instruments, feeding the patient the greatest possible concentration of oxygen during this brief interlude.

"Have we bothered him much so far?"

Evans shook his head. "There's no real shock — and the oximeter reading has hardly varied."

Andy wrapped his hands in the sterile towel that Vicki Ryan offered with long forceps and murmured his thanks as the tall nurse pushed a stool against his legs. Only when he had settled on this temporary resting place did he dare admit how tired he was. This unlocking of taut nerves was only a token of what lay ahead.

He turned to Dale, forcing lightness into his tone.

"Well, Doctor — would you care to switch to surgery, after tonight's sample?"

The pathologist's eyes gleamed above the mask. "As a student

of the Bible, you'll remember the rich youth's remark: *Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian*. Almost, but not quite—"

The muted whine of a siren cut into Dale's murmur—a wailing that seemed to come from the street below the surgery windows, matched by a twin banshee approaching from the north. Andy felt his spine tingle to that familiar sound—even as he remembered that Tony Korff was on the sick list and could plague him no more tonight. Above him, he saw the gallery of interns look up—and watched two of them slip out to check their wards.

"Emergency's getting some business, it seems—"

"That's a police siren, Andy."

"So it is, now you mention it. Who d'you suppose they're trailing—our friend the bomber?"

The whining died, as though the police cars had turned a corner or converged on a common rendezvous. Andy got to his feet again, shedding the unanswered question. Even if death had shown its face outside, he could afford to turn his back for now. The world and all its contradictions slipped into limbo as he squared off at the table again, and held out a gloved hand to Julia. . . .

## CHAPTER 11



THE WHINE of the sirens reached the brewery office faintly. Tony Korff stiffened for an instant, then shrugged off the sound. Trained as he was in nocturnal adventure, he could effortlessly sort out the ordinary muted street noises. He could thank his hospital training, too, for the nerveless calm that pervaded him as he bent over Bert Rilling's safe.

*Six left, seven right, three left.* The outer door of the safe sighed open, revealing four inner knobs. Rilling had said that the bottle was in the upper right-hand compartment. He began to spell out

the second combination with hands that did not waste a motion.

A rat crossed the brewery floor outside the office; he could hear the creature's scratchy progress as it darted round the copper-shod circumference of one of the great vats. Those vats were his friends, he thought—towering in the dingy wash of the street lights, closing him away from prying eyes outside. *Three right, seven left.* He could afford to laugh aloud, as he remembered the salute of the bluecoat on the corner. Another half hour, and he would take that same salute again, without breaking his stride. This time, \$50,000 in cash would be packed among the tools of his trade. Fat wads of bank notes, green and beautiful; the key to his emancipation, the open sesame for every doorway he had stormed in vain.

When the inner safe opened at last, he squatted on his haunches for a moment before he dared to explore its contents. For the first time, he was forced to use his flashlight—and, for one moment of blind fury, he was sure that Rilling had outwitted him after all. His darting hand met only papers, trash which he flung to right and left. . . . And then his fears exploded into a sigh of relief. There, in the very depths, was the dark, squat bottle—ice-cold to his touch, and far too heavy to lift with a single hand.

He held the flashlight between knees that were suddenly fluid as jelly as he eased the bottle from safe to desk. The old fox had concealed it well, there was no denying that. He needed all of five minutes before he could collect the paper snow he had flung about the office, stuff it into the safe again and close both doors.

When he had finished, he sat with his back pressed hard against the door of the safe, his eyes mesmerized by that rectangle of lead on the desk top. Some of his confidence returned when the flashlight assured him that the seal was tight, the bottle itself undamaged. Once he had forced himself to his feet, and started toward the outer doorway he began to get back his swagger.

The luminous dial of his wrist watch showed nine o'clock as he inched his way down the pitch-dark stairs. He would be punctual

with his signal—but not too punctual to seem anxious. Captain Falk of the *Baltic Prince* would have no cause for alarm when he picked up the wink of the flashlight across the river.

The heavy bottle had begun to tug at his wrists, and he set it down on the bottom step while he paused for breath. A bar of light fell across this portion of the brewery floor, and he smiled as he located its origin. He had forgotten that the walls of the surgery wing of East Side General abutted on the brewery at this point. That rectangle of light spilled down from the operating theater where Andy Gray was sweating at his trade. It was good to think of poor, plodding Andy at this moment. To admit, at last, that he hated Andy with all his heart. Feeling his way down past the flank of the first vat, the bottle cradled in one arm like a monstrous football, Tony cursed Andy fluently. There would be ways, later, to prove that he was Andy's superior, as a doctor and a man. . . .

He was between two vats now, moving by instinct, testing each step for hidden obstacles. Above and around him he could hear the bubbling of the sour mash in the vast copper receptacles. He breathed deep of the familiar stench of beer in the making. The miasma stirred his mind with half-forgotten childhood nightmares. He had been born in the shadow of a brewery much like this; his first youthful battles had been fought, bare-knuckled and alone, under those same dank walls. Somehow, it was right and proper that he should cut his last tie with the past in this sweating cave.

It was pitch-dark in the rear of the brewery, where the floor sloped slightly toward the wide double doors that gave to the quay. He felt his way with extra caution here, for the concrete floor was slimy from the dank exhalation of the river. The key turned easily in the lock; he felt the doorframe give under his hand—and cursed in earnest when he sensed an obstacle. A quick exploration identified the crossbar, placed diagonally across the entire width of the doorframe outside. He could make out the sil-

houette of the bulky beam through the cracks in the wood. Try as he might, he could not reach the quay from inside the brewery. His only choice was to leave by the warehouse platform and trust to the dark to hide his movements as he cut back through the alley to signal from the water's edge.

Who had placed that crossbar—and why? Even the stupidest watchman should have realized it was useless as a protection against prowlers, since it could be removed in an instant from the outside. He began his slow, crabwise progress back among the vats, damning his own stupidity for not checking his signal station before he entered the brewery. He could have removed that crossbar and saved precious minutes.

And then, as he hesitated inside the door to the loading platform, a fresh hypothesis brought sweat bursting from every pore. What if that crossbar had been placed *after* he entered Rilling's office? What if a second bar was in place across the warehouse platform, boxing him in the brewery as effectively as a mouse awaiting the arrival of the cat?

But his fright passed as the door to the warehouse platform swung wide, revealing the damp cobbles of the street beyond, and the silhouettes of the tenements. He had already put one foot on the loading platform before he saw that the street was no longer empty. In that flash, he knew why those police sirens had sounded in the night—and identified the contours of the two prowling cars that waited for their prey.

*"Come out, Korff! We've got you."*

He knew the voice instantly, though the speaker was deep in shadows. Inspector Hurlbut from Homicide. He could picture Hurlbut perfectly, waiting behind the bulletproof windshield. Two floodlights enfiladed the platform from left and right, bathing him in cruel radiance, pinning him to the wall.

*"Come out, Korff—and hold up your hands!"*

He screamed then as he slammed the door behind him and reeled back into the dark maw of the brewery. A shot sounded

as he ran, but he knew that he was safe — until Hurlbut and his men could break the lock. It was only when he caromed violently from the copper flank of a vat and all but dropped the bottle cradled in his arm, that his mind focused on a plan of action.

At all costs, he must get rid of that lead cylinder. So he reasoned while he ran, hearing the hammer blows on the huge warehouse door, the whine of yet another siren as a third prowler car rolled up outside. *Ditch this lead-wrapped horror — and ditch it now.* His mind, jumping madly from end to end of the gloomy brewery, fastened on the next vat, the slow, pulsating murmur of the fluids within. He stood on tiptoe, clawing at the copper tun with his free hand, making sure that the vessel had an open top. Try as he might, he could find no handhold, no means of pulling his eyes level with that mass of sour mash. But it seemed the only available hiding place, and there was no time to lose.

He heard the warehouse door squeak ominously, and realized that the police had begun working on the hasp with a crowbar. By grasping the lead bottle in both fists and putting out all his strength, he found that he could toss it head high. More than enough leeway to clear the lip of the vat . . . He heaved both arms a second time — and gasped out his relief when the heavy lead container slithered over the edge and plunged without a sound into the bubbling caldron. Then he groped his way toward the warehouse door.

When the explosion came, it bowled him head over heels. Half-shielded by the flank of the next vat, he knew that he had escaped injury for the moment, even as the whole brewery seemed to blossom with a blinding light. In that flash, he saw his error — and its fearful aftermath. Due to its great weight, the lead-lined container had plummeted through the thick skin of mash and the liquid beneath it. Striking the metal floor of the vat, it had splintered its seal, dumping its lethal contents into the active mash and splitting the copper-plated vat as easily as though the walls had been lined with cardboard.

Korff heard a babble of voices on the warehouse platform, and staggered to his feet again. At that precise moment the second vat, igniting from the first, split its sides with a mighty roar. In that moment, Tony Korff knew his first remorse and a rage that transcended fear. Obeying that burst of passion, he flung himself headlong against the sundering copper wall of the vat, clawing with both hands to stem the devil's caldron he had opened. For one crazy instant, he knew that he had triumphed over time and chance. Then, as the fiery liquid engulfed him, he ceased to know.

ANDY GRAY was tying a suture when the first explosion rattled the surgery windows. Intent on the task at hand, he did not even raise his head. He felt the slight jar underfoot and sensed the alarm in his assistants.

"Steady all," he said, without inflection. "Clamp, please, Miss Talbot."

The clamp had already come into his hand—the next link in the delicate connection between blood vessels that would save Jackie's life. For the past half hour, the surgical team had followed its textbook technique, with no important deviation. The subclavian artery that would bring a fresh supply of blood to Jackie's lungs was free and ready to do its part in the vital union. The lung artery that would supply the only missing link was prepared and delivered into the operative field. He adjusted the clamps and held out his hand for the surgical scissors. They were poised in his hand when the surgery window rattled a second time.

Dale Easton spoke the unformed thought aloud, as he stood ready across the table. "Is that thunder, or just a Saturday-night ruckus?"

"A bit of both, I'd say. Stand by to sponge, please—"

The scissors moved precisely, slitting the side of the vessel between the clamps. Dale's fingers moved into the incision, sponging away the small amount of blood that had gathered in the artery between the clamps. When the pulmonary artery was





ready, Andy delivered the end of the subclavian into the operative field.

"Sutures, Miss Talbot—"

The delicate needle was already in his palm, threaded with a slender strand of silk. This was the most important, and the most difficult, part of the entire operation. So far, they had proceeded by the book. Their technique had been a miraculous blending of tactile dexterity with the facts of anatomy—those same tedious facts that most interns had memorized and forgotten long ago. From this point on, the surgeon must do a solo performance, with emphasis on the virtuoso skill at his finger ends. Somehow, these two—the pulmonary, or lung, artery and the subclavian—vessels must be joined and made one. The slightest leakage around that man-made connection would be fatal.

Andy spoke to the microphone. "We use a continuous suture on the posterior side. And another continuous joining on the anterior. Stay sutures will be placed at both ends as an added precaution. . . ." Though he did not dare lift his eyes to the students' gallery at this point, he knew that most of his audience had evaporated. The fact was of no consequence. Jackie's life was his only stake—and Jackie's chances were building with each tick of the clock. He began to stitch the two blood vessels together.

The third explosion sent the bottles in the medicine cabinet dancing and bathed the wide window in an orange glow. From a lower floor, Andy heard the tinkle of breaking glass, a sudden clash of voices giving orders. He stepped back a pace from the table, and folded his hands in a sterile towel, holding his team immobile without a word.

"Will you take a look, Miss Ryan, and see what's wrong?"

No one stirred as Vicki hurried to the surgery window. Andy's eyes dared to seek Julia's, but he read no sign of fear there. Awaiting his orders, as always, she was a model of operating-room discipline—though he was sure that Julia, like the others, was frozen in the common dread.

He had no need to look up to guess that the observers' gallery was deserted now. He was only glad that the thick glass of the gallery had muted the rush to the corridor.

Vicki came under the cone of light again, her eyes wide above her mask. "The brewery's afire," she said. "From the inside. There are police cars in the alley now — and an engine working against the wall —"

Dale Easton did not stir, but his voice was taut. "No wonder the windows rattled. We're right across the street!"

"Don't call it a street," said Andy grimly. "It's barely wide enough for a single car." Again, he held the group steady with his eyes. "The tenement block is even closer, remember. Heaven help those poor devils in there, if they didn't get the warning in time —"

"Most of the hospital buildings are no safer. Including this one —"

"True enough. But we can't stop this operation now. Certainly not until we hear from Dr. Ash." Even as he spoke, Andy wondered if the director had left for Long Island after all. He made his voice firm with an effort. "Shall we stop losing time? It may be precious later."

Dale Easton nodded, just as grimly. "Thanks for calling the score, Doctor."

"Ready, Dr. Evans?"

"Ready as I'll ever be," said the anesthetist.

"Clamp, if you please, Miss Talbot!"

The sterile towel fell at Andy's feet unnoticed as he bent again above the operative field to continue the delicate stitching that would complete the join in time — if the surgery walls were still standing. Julia had already slapped the next instrument into his palm. He felt his heart swell with pride as the rest of the team moved in to take up their duties without a murmur. All of them knew that they must finish that delicate junction and close Jackie's chest before they dared remove him from the table. All of them

admitted, just as calmly, that they must put their own lives in the balance until the job was done.

MARTIN ASH had decided that there was nothing more he could do for East Side General that night—that Catherine, on Long Island, needed him more. After all, should anything happen, the hospital would continue functioning without missing a beat in the capable hands of Andy Gray.

He was walking down the driveway to his car when the first roaring detonation belched out of the alley. The shock of the displaced air rocked him on his heels, forcing him to grab a lamp-post for support. Then, as the first blast subsided, he heard the crackling of flames at the bend of the alley. Fearing that the tenement block had caught fire, he went down the narrow passageway on the run—until two blue-coated figures barred his path.

“Better stay where you are, Doctor. It’s the brewery.”

“How did it happen?”

“Vat blew sky-high, I guess. The Inspector’s behind that prowler car. He can tell you more than I can.”

Ash hunched his shoulders and ran toward the silhouette of the automobile, sharp-etched in the black-and-orange chiaroscuro of the building. Hurlbut, crouched in the shelter of a mudguard with a helmeted fire chief, waved in greeting as a fresh blast, deep in the heart of the brewery, shook the ground beneath their feet.

“Hell on your doorstep tonight, doctor. Sorry we couldn’t stop him in time—” The Inspector’s voice was calm enough, as he pulled Ash down beside him, just as a bit of flaming debris sailed overhead. “Of course, it was only a crazy tip from our reporter-friend. We had to let the fellow show his hand.”

“Who is he, Inspector?”

“One of your doctors. A fellow named Korff. Seems he had a hand in smuggling out that chemical we were looking for. I’m expecting more news later from across the river—” The Inspector bit the sentence in the middle, as though he had said too much too

soon. "Unfortunately, we weren't quite sure what he was doing inside the brewery. Not until it was too late to stop him —"

"I can't believe that Korff —" But Martin Ash felt the protest die in his throat. "Where is he now, Inspector?"

"Somewhere inside," said Hurlbut grimly. "What's left of him, at any rate — and I'll bet it's no sight to write home about. I'm afraid the fire'll do the rest, before we can get the body out —"

A brace of hook-and-ladder trucks had whined to a stop in the alley-mouth as they talked. Watching the firemen spring to action, Ash tried hard to assure himself that they would soon have the blaze under control. But even as he clung to that crazy hope, another explosion seemed to rock the whole brewery on its foundations, pouring a fiery debris into the street as a section of the wall buckled under the impact.

"I must get back to the hospital —" His voice was weighted with anxiety. "We must put our emergency plan to work right away."

The helmeted fire chief at Hurlbut's elbow spoke calmly, without taking his eyes from the hook-and-ladder squad. "The sooner the better, Doctor. How soon can you evacuate the wing that comes out to the alley?"

Martin Ash hesitated. The heart operation that Andy was performing came to his mind vividly in all its complex detail. Unless they sacrificed Jackie's life, it would be impossible to halt it now. "There's an important job going on in the operating theater," he said. "They can't finish for another hour, at least."

The chief looked up doubtfully at the great rectangle of lighted glass, a half dozen stories above them. "I hope the building's still there in another hour."

"Amen to that," said Ash — and backed away from the lash of the blaze.

Moving as though in some waking nightmare, he saw that the firemen themselves were retreating before the fury of the holocaust. Still another explosion had blasted a fresh breach in the

brewery wall while they talked. He paused for a second more to watch a tongue of flame lick out toward the ancient, red-brick wall of the old pathology building, to sear away its blanket of ivy, as neatly as a giant blowtorch. A jet of water from the nearest fire hose quickly extinguished the blaze—but it was a warning of how the hospital itself would fare if more than one vat exploded in unison.

A few minutes later Martin Ash was walking down the familiar corridor to his office. His hands were shaking as he poured himself a glass of water and drank it down. Then he settled at his desk and picked up the phone.

"Connect me with all the loudspeakers, will you, operator? I must speak to the whole hospital at once."

He could hear the girl's sudden gasp—and then, "The microphone is ready, Dr. Ash."

"Your attention, please — !" His voice was tight with excitement. Everything depended on his generalship now, on the smooth function of the disaster plan they had worked out months ago, as an air-raid precaution drill.

"This is Dr. Ash. Emergency Plan A will go into effect at once." That was better, he told himself; the unhurried voice in perfect control. "All other work must be dropped. If you are in doubt as to details, study the blueprint which is in every chart book. All stretchers and litters will be sent, with all available orderlies and ambulatory patients, to the old wards—which are to be evacuated. Patients will be transferred to the fireproof wards, according to the details of the plan. All surgical residents will report to the Emergency Ward immediately—except for Dr. Gray and his team, who will await orders in their theater."

When he replaced the telephone, he found that his face was drenched with sweat. He summoned the operator a second time. "I must go to the O.R. for a moment," he told her. "Have someone take all calls for me until I can reach the Emergency Ward."

In the scrub room, he stopped to don a mask and gown before

he moved into the muted bustle of the theater. Andy Gray, tying off a suture deep in the operative field, looked up as his senior moved into the huddled group around the table.

"Glad you're back, Dr. Ash. I was afraid you'd left for the week-end."

Martin found he was smiling under his mask. Andy's devotion to the task at hand was vastly reassuring. "I had one foot in my car when the fire started," he said. "How are things going here?"

"We're about a third through the anastomosis."

"Will you need much more time?"

"Thirty minutes. Maybe forty-five. I can close with through-and-through sutures if necessary. But I must get this anastomosis right. The last explosion sounded like hell in the making."

Dale Easton spoke from his side of the table. "Does this business have anything to do with that stolen chemical?"

"The police are sure it does," said Ash. "Korff was in on the smuggling, it seems. He paid with his life when the business backfired. . . ." He drew a deep breath. "This building is almost certain to go. How soon, we've no idea."

Andy reached for a fresh suture needle. "Are you suggesting we abandon this patient now, doctor?"

"I'm suggesting nothing," said Martin Ash. "You're in charge here, Andy. But I do think you should all speak for yourselves, now you know the score."

"We won't know the score until we've closed," said Andy. "I, for one, intend to stay until the job's over. What about you, Miss Talbot?"

"We can't stop now," said Julia—and her voice was even steadier than Andy Gray's. "You know I'm leaving the hospital tomorrow, Dr. Ash. I couldn't go with my last job unfinished—"

"Nor could I," said Andy. "I'm sorry, Doctor. This has been a—a rather hectic day. I didn't have time to tell you I'll soon be setting up practice elsewhere."

Ash, watching the battle of glances across the table, saw a mes-

sage in Julia's eyes that he could not quite translate. But there was no time to ponder it now—or to argue with Andy's bluntly stated decision. It must mean a better offer from uptown, perhaps a career financed by Pat Reed.

He said carefully, "Andy, you can excuse your circulating nurses at this point, I hope, except Miss Ryan. We'll be needing them in Emergency. And I'll be needing Dr. Easton, too, the moment he's free—"

"Dr. Easton can join you now, if he likes," said Andy. "Miss Talbot and I can finish between us, if Miss Ryan will assist."

Ash glanced quickly at Vicki Ryan, but the tall nurse's gaze did not falter. "I'm on your team, Dr. Gray."

"And you, Dr. Evans?"

The bulky anesthetist shifted his weight on the high throne-stool at the table's head. "Count me in here, too, Dr. Ash."

"What about it, Dale? Will you come with me now?"

The pathologist's voice was quite steady. "If you don't mind, sir, I'll stay awhile with the team."

Ash drew back from the circle of light. Now, more than ever, he felt like an intruder. He heard his voice go on, nonetheless.

"I'd shut off that explosive gas, if I were you—"

"I already have, Dr. Ash," said the anesthetist. "Not that it matters too much. We're sitting over a dozen tanks of cyclopropane in the storage room."

The windows throbbed as another orange flare shook the night outside, outlining the hunched figure of the surgeon and his assistant on the far wall of the room. Ash left the room—noting that Andy Gray had calmly gone on with his work.

As he stepped into the corridor of the Emergency Ward, Martin Ash saw that Plan A had gone into gear without a hitch; an intern, with a casebook open on the desk before him, snapped to attention as precisely as though East Side General were under enemy fire.

"Cases moving on schedule, Doctor. And we already have casu-



alties from outside. I've a fireman on the table now — will you have a look?"

Ash nodded, and turned through the door of the first operating room — one of a series of emergency setups that extended down the whole side of the corridor.

"Serious?"

"Back injury, Doctor. He was thrown from the wall in that last cave-in —"

Ash stood at the man's side — noting with approval that the patient had already been prepared for the surgery that might still avert paralysis or death itself. He reached down and pressed the man's foot upward. Normally, there would have been an instinctive reflex contraction of the muscles opposing such a motion. Here, those same muscles seemed dead, as if all control in that area had been lost. . . . Dislocated vertebrae, he thought. Still, it doesn't look hopeless, if he's not too far gone in shock.

"Get fresh plasma started at once," he said. "And order whole blood from the bank. We'll want a quick X ray, too, in case the cord is injured. Is Dr. van Pelt ready to operate?"

"Standing by now, sir. Will you take over the book?"

Seated beside his intern at the admissions desk, he found that he was in harness again, with no effort at all. He had come just in time. Patients began to arrive from the scene of the fire; other cases from the firemen's ranks, their faces pallid from smoke injury or the searing flames themselves. He could read the progress of the holocaust, even before the first tenement victims began to arrive.

Martin Ash did not allow his mind to dwell on the threat to these human rookeries, though it was now evident that many of the cases could have arrived from no other source. His brain was an efficient machine, classifying casualties according to need. Surgical cases to the left. Check the blood bank one more time — and praise Heaven that other hospitals had sent help.

He passed a hand across his eyes as the line lengthened. In that

pause, he heard the steady hum of activity from the auxiliary storeroom, where a pulmotor and portable oxygen machines administered artificial respiration to those overcome by smoke and heat.

The hands of his watch showed ten when Martin Ash looked up into the grimy face of a fireman. "How are things going, Chief?"

"I'm not the Chief, doc. The Chief's got troubles of his own."

Martin Ash glanced down the long line of stretchers and walking wounded. "If I can be of help—?"

"The surgical building's caught. Chief thinks we better let that building go and try to save the others. He wants to know what about the job that's going on there."

"We have orderlies standing by to bring the patient here as soon as the operation is finished. We simply can't evacuate now."

The fireman shook his head. "Hadn't you better pass the word along? It's their own lives they're risking up there."

"I tried that once," said Martin Ash grimly. "They're too busy to listen."

Another stretcher case moved up to the desk and Ash forgot the fireman instantly. It's quite right, he thought, as he made the next entry. Andy and his team were too busy to listen to the voice of reason. So, for that matter, am I.

He felt his heart expand in a wordless prayer while his busy fingers endorsed yet another entry. If Andy and company are alive this time tomorrow, he promised his Creator, I'll work at being Catherine's husband now and forevermore. If the hospital is spared—or even its shell—I'll move it uptown, if it's what she really wants.

## CHAPTER 12



**T**HANKS to the MD license on her car, Catherine Ash had dared to push her speedometer past 60 on the Long Island span of the Triborough Bridge.

At first, her drive into the city had been only an impulse to go home, to wait for Martin at the apartment after his work. Acknowledging her own urgent need to be with him, mocked by the silent telephone, she had quietly slipped away from a dinner picnic.

And then as she drove, still unsure whether to surrender to that impulse or to turn back to her guests, a news broadcast had cut through the music on her car radio.

A fire of unknown origin in the brewery adjoining the East Side General Hospital. A fire that had spread instantly, to engulf the whole block of adjoining tenements and threatened, at this very moment, to sweep over the hospital itself . . .

With the first words her figure had stiffened and her foot pressed down on the accelerator. Martin is still there, she thought. He was right to stay at the hospital tonight. So right that I'll never question his judgment again.

"I must go to him at once," she had said, with no knowledge that she had spoken aloud.

Now, as the car left the Triborough Bridge and turned down to the East River Drive, she was conscious of an ominous red glow to the south. Then she was closer. The great white bulk of East Side General blocking off the southern sky still managed to look aloof and self-contained. Somehow, she had expected to see Martin's world in ruins: it was an unhopd-for relief to find its walls inviolate.

And then, as she drew closer, she saw that two of the old, red-brick wards had already crumbled, after all. Even as she strained

her eyes into the orange flare, another building caved in upon itself. She saw the firemen jump clear.

You must spare the hospital, she told them wordlessly as her car thrust toward the first police cordon. You must give me a chance to prove that I understand my husband—and my husband's dream. We can rebuild those walls tomorrow. . . .

Her brakes screamed, just in time to avoid the roadblock on the edge of the esplanade. She leaped out of the car, and ran toward the crowd massed tightly behind the fire line.

Others were running, too, pulled toward the focus of disaster. She heard but dimly the hoarse shouts, the hiss of the water pumps and the crash of falling timbers. The fire itself was a gigantic footlight trough, outlining the faces of the sweating firemen. Highlights from the gold-stamped visor of a fire chief's cap caught her eye as a raincoat-clad figure sprang to bar her path.

"Stay where you are, lady—!"

Catherine Ash strained hard against the rope that cut the narrow street from curb to curb. The crowd that hemmed her in was quiet here. All faces were turned toward the blazing tenement at the street's end—all were suffused by the same fearful glow.

The burning building, she saw, was the rookery where the Aschoffs had lived so long. Half the tenement was gone. From where she stood, it seemed deserted. Catherine could only infer that Martin's parents had been evacuated, along with the other inmates who now sat huddled in doorways farther up the street. She had already turned back toward the hospital when she recognized one grief-stricken voice above all the others. In another moment, she had pushed her way into the smoke-stained throng to take Mama Aschoff into the haven of her arms. Lamenting in her own tongue, seemingly blind to externals, the old woman did not recognize her at once. When Catherine had repeated her name, she opened her tear-blurred eyes and clung to her daughter-in-law as though her presence had brought new strength.

"I was away, Catherine. Only this moment do I return on sub-

way—" Her voice steadied. "He is still in there. The neighbors are sure of it. No one thought to bring him out—"

Catherine's eyes turned back to the tenement. The flames had already begun to consume the very walls of the building. She considered quickly. There was no time to send for Martin; this was her responsibility—and hers alone. The realization steadied her instantly. Her voice was calm when she led her mother-in-law toward the fire line.

"We'll make them do something. Be sure of that—"

"I tried to go in twice, Catherine. They pushed me back."

"Stay right here. It's my turn now."

She was gone before Mama Aschoff could speak again—running toward a knot of helmeted figures all but hidden by the smoke that gushed from the tenement. She was shouting as she ran, in a raucous voice that had never belonged to Catherine Ash.

"There's an old man in there! On the second floor front. He's blind and can't get out—"

The assistant fire chief turned with a kind of weary patience. "Everybody's out of that building, lady. We ordered them out as soon as the tenement caught."

"But nobody has seen him come out. It's Dr. Ash's father—"

A confused babble rose from the crowd against the rope a scant 50 feet away. "She's right, Chief!" a hoarse voice shouted. "Mr. Aschoff didn't come out with us. We all thought he was with his wife—"

The assistant fire chief turned toward the shout—and Catherine chose that moment to duck beneath his arm and run toward the burning building.

As she groped in the thick fog of smoke just inside the door, she heard the assistant chief bellow, "Hold everything, lady—!" and then, "Give me a wall of water! I'm going after her!"

She heard his feet on the broken treads of the stoop outside as she probed into the hall, groping with both hands for the stair rail. She remembered to bend almost double as she climbed, seek-

ing the thin stratum of fresh air that still existed under the billows of smoke snaking down from above. In a few moments more, the stair well would be engulfed, collapsing the whole interior framework of the tenement into the caldron that was the basement. Feeling the smoke sear her lungs, she struggled on.

A window at the end of the second floor hall was torn from its hinges, creating a draft. As the smoke swirled away, she saw that the hallway itself was, as yet, untouched by fire. The door to the Aschoffs', like the others, was closed. Her hand found the knob, and as the portal swung wide, a blast of cool air struck her. She did not understand its origin until she had moved into the room and felt a spray of water on her smoke-blackened hair.

Catherine Ash found that she could still laugh — though the laughter was colored with hysteria. At both ends of the Aschoff living room, an overhead water pipe had burst under the fire, creating a small island of safety in this portion of the apartment. Papa Aschoff was seated in his chair in the midst of this Heaven-sent lake: even in the flame-shot gloom, she saw how quietly his hands were folded as he waited for death.

She called his name, and the old man raised his head. His voice was part of his outer tranquillity — a serene whisper from the tomb.

"Why are you here, Catherine?"

"I've come to take you out," she said — and she could marvel at her steady tone. "They wouldn't believe you were still inside —"

"You risked your life for that? The life of an old man isn't worth it."

"Martin is busy at the hospital," she said. "There was nobody else to come for you. Can you — get up from that chair?"

"I can walk. But you must go back without me."

"Don't talk, please," she said. "Save all the breath you can." Their hands met; already, she was leading his unwilling footsteps toward the door and the dense wall of smoke outside. Just inside the doorway she dropped to her knees and pulled him down be-

side her. "We must crawl down the stair and hug the wall. There's too much smoke to risk walking."

He crawled obediently in her wake, from door to stair well. Catherine felt her heart plummet as she saw how rapidly the fire had invaded the lower stair well. Already, the banister was ablaze down its entire length, and the treads were hot to the touch. Behind her, she could hear Papa Aschoff's labored breathing, as he strove to match her snaillike progress. Another yard, and she felt a tread give under her weight—but it was too late to stop now. There was a rending sound at her left, then a tearing crescendo down the whole length of the stairway. Just below, she suddenly saw the circle of the waiting fire net. They fell toward it together.

The old man struck the net a fraction ahead of her. Then they were both bounding crazily in the canvas haven, just before the fire-crew rushed them into the air again. She had a dim sense of moisture, and knew that they had cut through the wall of water to gain the street beyond. Then blackness engulfed her.

When she opened her eyes, she knew that she had only fainted. She staggered to her feet. On the cleared strip of sidewalk a man in white, whom she recognized as one of Martin's interns, bent over a stretcher on which lay Papa Aschoff. Even as he looked up and his eyes met hers, she read the reassurance in his eyes.

"He isn't hurt badly, Doctor?"

"He isn't hurt at all, Mrs. Ash," said the intern cheerfully. "A bit shaken up after that jump; nothing a good rest won't cure. We're taking him to a hospital bed—"

"I want to see my husband," she said.

"Just stay with the orderlies, Mrs. Ash. They're going to your husband now."

She never quite remembered crossing the esplanade or entering the wide brass doors. Later, she would recall how Mama Aschoff detached herself from the crowd, to march proudly beside the stretcher that held her husband. Later still, her senses would bring back the sharp, antiseptic smell of the corridor in the emergency

ward, the line of patients. A slow, patient line that paused, and moved, and paused again at the precise spot where her husband sat, dispensing his healing. Once her eyes had found Martin, she could see nothing else.

He's where he belongs, she thought. He's with his own people — helping them. . . .

The stretcher was beside the admissions desk now, the last item in the dwindling line. Martin Ash looked up from his casebook with tired eyes, then rose to his feet. For a long instant, while he took in the tableau before him, he seemed to hesitate, as though he could not believe the evidence of his senses. Then he moved quickly forward and took her in his arms.

IN THE surgical wing, the operating theater might have been a little world of its own. If any of its five inhabitants heard the thud of the hoses just outside, as the firemen drenched the facing wall in a desperate effort to stave off ruin, the sound came through but dimly. The shouts of the firemen themselves, and the confused, throaty rumble of the crowd behind the fire lines were a cacophony from another planet.

Andy Gray, feeling yet another suture slap into his extended palm, knew that he should thank God their luck had held so far, both on and off the table. But there was no time for prayers now — and still less for any thought that moved beyond the cone of light that had imprisoned them here forever. Even the hand that had just offered him his final suture needle was part of the life he had excluded from his brain, by a sheer effort of the will. Loving the owner of that hand more than she could ever dream — and knowing just what he must say to her if they walked out of this room alive — he could forget her existence even now, as he pointed the needle for its last thrust.

"Steady all. It's nearly over."

Subclavian and pulmonary arteries were one now — so smoothly joined that he could hardly see where his task had begun and



ended. If those sutures held, Jackie's blood would soon be pulsing here, ready to supply the oxygen lack that had crippled him. He pulled the last strand taut and tied it off with steady fingers.

"Stay sutures, please."

They were already in his hand, the extra bulwarks that would protect the anastomosis itself. Placing them, and knotting the ends, was only routine. He breathed deep, and knew that now their ultimate test was upon them. The release of the arterial clamps would permit the circulation to reassert itself against the new protective wall his surgery had created. If there was leakage, no matter how fragmentary, the operation must continue until that leak was stopped.

He forced his fingers to release the first clamp—the one that held the pulmonary artery. When the passageway was free for the blood to surge through, he released the subclavian clamp. The vessels distended dramatically, swelled and throbbed with the compulsion of Jackie's heartbeats.

It's holding firm, he thought. There isn't a trace of leakage anywhere. It's part of Jackie, now and forevermore. But he kept the exultation from his voice as he faced Julia across the table.

"Through-and-through sutures, please. There isn't time for more."

"They're ready now, Doctor." Her tone was as clinical as his own—yet he knew she was smiling beneath that mask.

He closed the incision rapidly. There was time to hear the roar of the fire now—the ominous pulsation in the wall that faced the alley.

"Skin clips, please—"

He closed the skin with these metal clips, since they could be inserted far more rapidly than the needle.

"Stretcher waiting, Doctor."

"Thank you, Miss Ryan. I think we can go now, if Dr. Evans is ready."

The anesthetist removed the oximeter from the patient's ear

lobe. "Oxygen tension has already risen," he said evenly. "The orderlies can have him."

Moving as a team even now, they lifted Jackie among them and transferred him smoothly to the stretcher, and then into a waiting elevator. At the street level, a platoon of firemen assumed command—relieving Andy of responsibility so painlessly that he never felt the transition. He saw the fire line from the corner of one eye, and the massed humanity who had just raised a cheer.

Julia's fingers were entwined in his when they walked into the shadow of the nurses' building—a blessed haven at this moment, shut off from the holocaust that still howled in the west. They paused in the deep shadow of the entrance, where they had exchanged their first kiss a scant 24 hours ago.

"Were you frightened—really?" he asked.

Her eyes met his in the fire-laced gloom. "*You* weren't, Andy—why should I be?"

"Are you frightened now?"

"Not if you meant what you said to Dr. Ash."

"About leaving New York—?"

"Tell me where you'll go next," she said, a trifle breathlessly. "I'd really like to hear the news, ahead of everyone."

"I'm joining Timmie in Florida," he said—and his voice was as quiet as her own. "Didn't you know all along I'd come to that?"

Her eyes answered him without words as he bent toward her. Both of them laughed a little as they realized that she had not even paused to untie her surgical mask. The bit of gauze dropped to the walk unheeded as their lips met for the first kiss they had ever really shared.

PETE COLLINS emerged from the phone booth in the rotunda, and mopped a soot-stained brow. Offhand, he could not remember when he had been wearier. Yet he was almost sorry the excitement was over—the fire beaten down at last. As he moved slowly toward the outer doorway, reluctant to leave the scene of

his triumph, he saw the tall girl in evening dress seated on the bench between two marble pillars.

"Can I help you, Miss Reed?"

Pat Reed rose to her full height. "How did you know my name?"

"A newspaperman knows everything. Been waiting long?"

"Only a moment, thank you."

"If you're looking for Andy Gray," said Pete judiciously, "he just went down that corridor, with his arm round his fiancée."

"Did you say his *fiancée*?"

He had expected to enjoy Pat's surprise, but there was something in that involuntary cry that touched his heart, case-hardened though it was. He made his voice light with an effort.

"They've been engaged for just an hour, so you couldn't be expected to know. Didn't you realize that Andy is the type who always marries his O.R. special?"

Her chin was up in earnest now; he knew that she would never look handsomer, or more dangerous. "Perhaps you can tell me where to find Dr. Korff?"

"Dr. Korff is downstairs," he said. "On a slab in the morgue. Read the morning papers, and you'll see why."

Pat Reed laughed aloud, then—and the laughter sent a chill down his spine. There was no hysteria in her tone, and no pity whatever. The long pale hands that reached for a cigarette were steady. The eyes that met Pete Collins', as he snapped a lighter for her, were undisturbed.

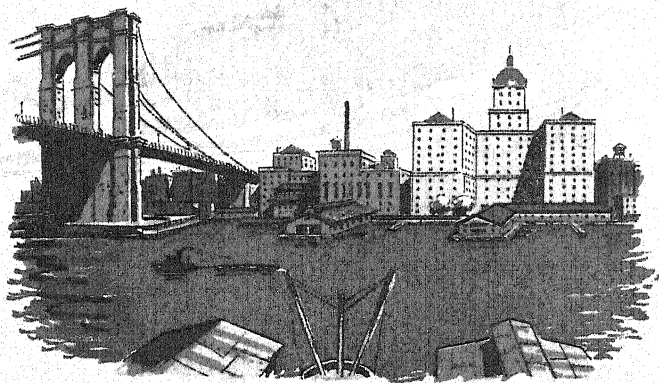
"Apparently this isn't my night," she said. He watched her go through the great brass doors, alone into the darkness.

He would always remember Pat Reed's laugh as her personal valedictory to Tony Korff. His own last words on that evil figure promised to be longer drawn out. Hurlbut had been unable to deliver his promised scoop on Korff—the intern's own actions had prevented that, for a five-alarm fire had inevitably brought every reporter in New York on the run.

The *Baltic Prince*, however, was now in the hands of the harbor police, and the confession of its skipper, Captain Boris Falk, was something else again. It would be months, of course, before that sinister trail was explored to the end—but the *Chronicle* had been promised an inside track when the story finally broke. Pete himself would write the series of articles exposing the smuggling ring—that was foreordained. It was the break he had prayed for ever since he received his first police card.

Never, in all his experience, had a hunch paid off more handsomely. The more he pondered on that chance encounter with Korff at the *Chronicle*, the more he was struck by the intern's stupidity. It had been child's play for Hurlbut to intercept the messenger bearing Tony's note to the *Baltic Prince*; it had been routine police procedure to set the trap in the brewery and wait for Tony to walk in. Korff's death by fire, too, had its symbolic overtone, the expiation of evil that gave a neat ending to the front-page story he had just wrapped up for the city desk.

He was dog-tired now, but before he turned in, Pete Collins had one more story to finish. Tonight Catherine Ash had announced her plans to rebuild the hospital, where it had always stood—downtown. It would be a good story to write, because of the reassurance it would carry. . . . The new hospital could still claim full right to the old name—East Side General.



*Dr. Frank G. Slaughter*



DR. FRANK G. SLAUGHTER was born in Washington, D. C., in 1908. A *cum laude* graduate of Duke University at 18, he received his medical degree from Johns Hopkins in 1930. Four more years of surgical training prepared him for a busy and successful practice.

In 1942, when he was called into the Army Medical Corps as a major, Dr. Slaughter had two novels to his credit. The first, *That None Should Die*, published in 1941, was a world-wide best seller on the problems of socialized medicine. While chief surgeon at a large military hospital, and later as senior medical officer of a hospital ship, Dr. Slaughter wrote a series of books on wartime themes, beginning with *Air Surgeon*. He also became interested in Civil War medicine, and this led to the highly popular *In a Dark Garden*, of which almost a million copies have been sold.

Intrigued by the historical novel, in his subsequent novels he has ranged across the centuries. His 1951 success, *The Road to Bithynia*, was a story of Biblical times. With *East Side General*, Dr. Slaughter returns to contemporary New York City.